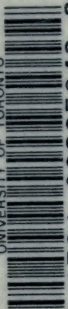


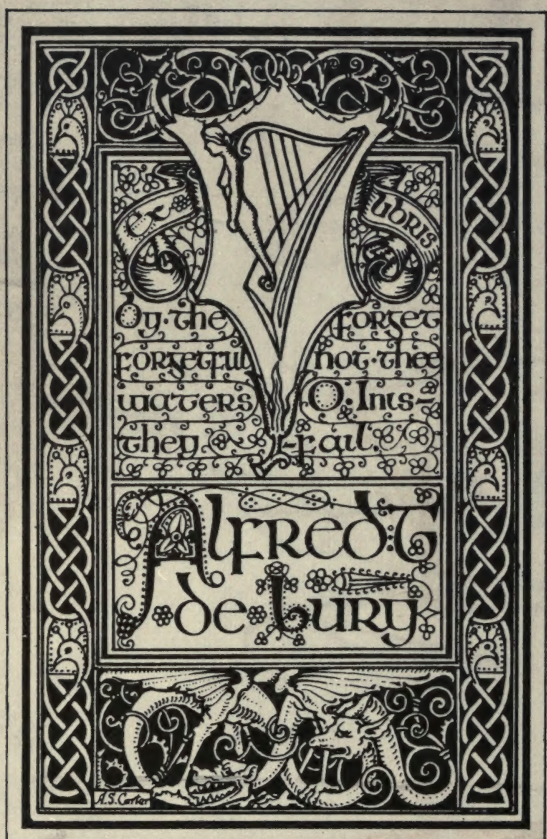
# ALL MANNER OF FOLK

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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HOLBROOK JACKSON




A.S. Carter



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**ALL MANNER OF FOLK**

**By the same Writer**

**ROMANCE AND REALITY  
PLATITUDES IN THE  
                                  MAKING  
GREAT ENGLISH NOVEL-  
                                  ISTS**

**BERNARD SHAW:**

**A Monograph**

**WILLIAM MORRIS:**

**Craftsman—Socialist**







WHISTLER  
BY  
JOSEPH SIMPSON, R.B.A.



# ALL MANNER OF FOLK

## INTERPRETATIONS AND STUDIES

BY

HOLBROOK JACKSON

III



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## NOTE

I AM fortunate in being able to illustrate this volume with five drawings, and for that privilege I have to thank my friends Gordon Craig, Jo Davidson, Lovat Fraser and Joseph Simpson, R.B.A., and I am indebted also to the editor of *The Mask* for the courtesy of permitting me to reproduce Mr Craig's study of Whitman from the pages of his excellent journal, and to Messrs Maunsel & Co., of Dublin, the publishers of Synge's works, for permission to reproduce the drawing of John M. Synge by J. B. Yeats, R.H.A.

H. J.

MILL HILL, N.W.,  
*June 1912*

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*We move about in nature, cunning and cheerful, in order that we may surprise everything in the beauty peculiar to it ; we make an effort, whether in sunshine or under a stormy sky, to see a distant part of the coast with its rocks, bays, and olive and pine trees under an aspect in which it achieves its perfection and confirmation. Thus also we should walk about among men as their discoverers and explorers, meting out to them good and evil in order that we may unveil the peculiar beauty which is seen with some in the sunshine, in others under thunder-clouds, or with others again only in twilight and under a rainy sky.—FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE*

## CONCERNING PERSONALITIES

**A**LL books save those which subserve some fact such as, say, ferro-concrete or the migration of swallows or the differential calculus, and even, perhaps, these also, are about persons. The best books are about one person—the author. I have yet to meet the writer, or any kind of artist, who has other interests. The test of an artist lies in his power of attracting attention to himself, for by doing so he aids others in the same pleasant occupation in reference to themselves. Most people will deny this. They prefer to assert their interest in things, in ideas, in persons, men, women and children, races and castes, and, whilst such an assertion is far from being untrue, it is not the whole truth. It is a kind of truth—possibly the truth that passeth understanding—and I am not one to deny that it is a very good kind of truth, meet for dwellers on the edge of mystery, fair currency for those who have no desire to spend themselves in argument. But behind the truth that passeth understanding (which is an impossible proposition, for no one can get behind it) argumentative persons might, for purposes of discussion, affix labels, as it were, indicating starting points and directions for more argument. (Let us remember

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that man lives not by bread alone.) Such an imaginary label would I affix to this question of self-interest. It would suggest that men are pre-occupied with others for the sake of personal comparison. Whenever we appreciate another person we compare him unconsciously with ourselves. He is what we are or imagine we are, and so ensures self-confidence ; he is not what we are nor what we wish to be, and so feeds conceit ; or he is what we would be, and so encourages emulation, despair and many other things good, bad or just futile, according to idiosyncrasy. Such an argument explains somewhat our remarkable interest in all that pertains to personality.

Habit and custom generally belie themselves when it comes to those half-admitted and often wholly unadmitted preferences which exist deep down in the consciousness of each one of us. We are not what we claim to be, any more than we are what we seem to be ; we are what we are, and the only proof of our validity as factors in the game of life is to be found in the reality of our personal tastes. These go back to the beginnings of us and everything, and, deny them as often as we may, they always remain the final indications, primitive and eternal, and the only things of more than passing interest to us or to others. It has been found convenient in social life to discourage the complete logical expression of whim, for all really personal preferences are whims, otherwise the clash of over-insistent personality would make the



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thing we call society an impossibility. But, being human, and often very human, there is little doubt that we have gone further in our discouragement than was either advisable or intended. The result is that the expression of personality, as a sign of variety, is probably less obvious among civilised people to-day than ever it was. We have grown shy of personal differences, within more or less loosely defined classes, even where they are permitted, with the result that similarity and uniformity, rather than variety, are becoming habits. In essentials, however, despite it being bad form to express decided preferences or convictions, or to make what are known as personal remarks about others, we are all obviously interested in personalities and the strong convictions of others. The distinguished person is a cult, emphatic statement, in art and ideas, a fashion. And just as there are people who devote their spare time to collecting ideas which are so new and strange as to have an exaggerated importance, so too there are others, and these are the majority, who might be said to collect those exaggerated personalities known as eminent men. The pastime is sometimes called "lionising," and, although a healthy and keen sense of humour keeps the habit within the bounds of seemliness in this country, in some countries, particularly in the United States, it has become shameless convention. Personal distinction of any kind is there received with a rapturous adoration which has small reference to the thing achieved by the adored one. In England it is

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different; we like to waylay eminent and distinguished persons and to look at them (we will sometimes pay for the privilege), but we nearly always end by laughing at them.

Perhaps abnormal inquisitiveness about outstanding personalities is a reaction from the monotony of personal uniformity. We grow weary of the sameness of the marching army, in spite of its swing and dash, and find ourselves involuntarily waiting for the officers to pass. Such an interest in personality is probably negative in effect. But there is an interest in personality which is almost as widespread, but far more intimate in bearing and effect. It reveals itself in the affectionate regard we have for the personal note in literature. All literature is, in one and a very real sense, the transmutation of personality into words, but there is a kind of literature which is more distinctly personal than literature in general. It is the literature of intimate, personal revelation; the literary expression of the whole man and not merely a part of him, or a single attitude which most endears itself to readers of such books. One recalls the names of their writers with much the same sort of affection that one has for intimate friends: Charles Lamb, Montaigne, Sir Thomas Browne, Walt Whitman, Thoreau, Edward Fitzgerald, and a few more, but only a very few, for such writers must not only have the power of transmuting their personalities into enduring phrases and sentences: they must have personalities which in themselves are delightful. But

## CONCERNING PERSONALITIES

even in those cases where charm of personality does not exist, the translation of unlikeable natures into literature is interesting. One of the first qualities of all good writing is, then, the infusion of words with the stuff of personality, with those qualities which distinguish a writer from the rest of humanity, which show him, if only for a moment, for what he is, so that we may the more surely realise how he stands to us and we to him. People may be interested in ideas, in social progress towards definite ends, in research, and in many other things, but underlying all these interests, and far away and beyond every one of them, they are interested in personality. Consciously and unconsciously we are all intensely curious about each other, whether or not that curiosity is but the prelude to interest in self, as I believe it is, and in a way all profoundly interesting literature is in the nature of gossip. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in that eternal searching for unity which would seem to underlie so much of human interest in life, for every human desire is a paradox, and if man wishes above all things to discover and express himself, he desires above everything to do this through others.

Man is a gregarious animal, striving to be social. It is not enough that he herds in cities and societies : that would satisfy the animals, but man has, in addition to the consciousness of animals, the self-consciousness of the human being, and this last makes mutual inquisitiveness inevitable. We cannot bear the idea of separation ; if we are marooned we go mad,



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and the subtlest form of punitive torture in our prison system is solitary confinement. But in modern life we have so many opportunities of satisfying the more clamant and obvious of our gregarious needs, that the mind goes forth, wandering in search of quiet and more intimate associations. Art provides these, when they cannot be found within one's own mind, which is the first place one should look for them. But in spite of this human need of community, there have always been people who have desired to be independent of others and capable of living socially with none but themselves and their own dreams, ideas and fancies. In recent years some people of this type, which produces the extremes of anchorite and despot, have sought to formulate a doctrine of militant personalism. Philosophic egoism has, of course, always existed in one form or another, but the new egoism is far from being academic; on the contrary, it laughs at all theories which will not stand the test of personal practice. The modern philosophic egoist is avowedly dynamic; he believes in action, in living his philosophy and practising his idealism. That is very right: it is important that we should be ourselves, especially in an age like the present, when the majority of people are content to live second-hand lives; but I doubt very much whether you can be yourself by deliberately setting out with that object in view. The man who is over-anxious about being himself generally ends in being somebody else. We have had many instances of the sort of thing in the

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advanced circles which receive inspiration from the works of Ibsen, Bernard Shaw and Friedrich Nietzsche. The devoted egoists of those entertaining coterie have so enthusiastically abandoned themselves to the dicta of their philosophic heroes, have so insisted upon themselves in accordance with the principles laid down by their masters, that they have ended by becoming nothing more than irritating echoes. There is no royal road to personal expression. Emerson's command—"Insist on yourself!"—is all very well, but not quite so easy as it seems. The ego is a very elusive quantity, and a search for it is like searching for the pea beneath the Fakir's thimble, or the Queen in the three-card trick of the English racecourse; it is there, to be sure, but so uncertainly there that its very existence is a menace and a snare. Nevertheless there is little doubt that Emerson's ideal of self-reliance gets very near the heart of the matter, and it anticipates those theories of intuition which are the basis of the more fashionable philosophy of Henri Bergson. A safer guide in such matters, however, is Walt Whitman, but not so much as a personal force himself, or a tracer of personal force in others, as the advocate of the negation of leadership of any kind, even his own. He who would be my disciple, he says in effect, must first learn how to destroy the master. There, I think, we get the common sense of the utility of personality. Discipleship is permissible, but only as a guide, an indicator: for at the end of all discipleship is the cause of oneself. Perhaps, after all, personality

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reveals itself when we act not so much because of ourselves as by ourselves ; when we are so interested in the thing we do, or the life we live, that self is forgotten. But whatever the cause or the effect of personal force, it is quite clear that mere endeavour after personal expression for its own sake is futile. Personality is shy of all doctrine, and the only way to cultivate it is to forget about it.

But at the same time there are legitimate grounds for curiosity about oneself ; and the question is not so much how to abolish personal self-concern, as how to utilise, how to direct it, and how to inform it with seemliness and practical power. It is not, however, my intention to propagate a doctrine or to seek converts to a point of view ; my desire is merely to indicate a process in the psychology of personality. And I fancy that process is to be seen most clearly at work in the sphere of criticism. Criticism is the art of comparing the ideas and actions of others with one's own, and whether it be personal or impersonal it is always in the nature of a confession of self on the part of the critic. Some critics have been fully conscious of this natural outcome of their art. The well-known words of Anatole France will come readily to the mind. " As I understand it," he says, " and as you allow me to practise it, criticism, like philosophy and history, is a sort of romance, and all romance, rightly taken, is an autobiography. The good critic is he who narrates the adventures of his own mind among masterpieces." The eminent French writer



## CONCERNING PERSONALITIES

reveals himself in those words quite as truly as he reveals the essential charm of the critical faculty, for no criticism has charm unless it spring from some such basis. Anatole France reveals even the *savant* and the Member of the Institute of France by his insistence on masterpieces, which need not necessarily be the concern of critics as such.

That conscious master of subjective criticism probably came nearer the true meaning of the function of criticism when he said: "The highest criticism really is, the record of one's own soul. It is more fascinating than history, as it is concerned simply with oneself. It is more delightful than philosophy, as its subject is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilised form of autobiography, as it deals not with events, but with the thoughts of one's own life; not with the life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind. I am always amused by the silly vanity of those writers and artists of our day who seem to imagine that the primary function of the critic is to chatter about their second-rate work. The best that one can say of most modern creative art is that it is just a little less vulgar than reality, and so the critic, with his fine sense of distinction and sure instinct of delicate refinement, will prefer to look into the silver mirror or through the woven veil, and will turn his eyes away from the chaos and clamour of actual existence, though the mirror be tarnished and the

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veil be torn. His sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions. It is for him that pictures are painted, books written, and marble hewn into form." There is no reason why the critic should not seek adventure among accredited masterpieces, and on the other hand there is no reason why he should. Anything may set one off on the adventure of criticism; it may be a masterpiece, and often is a masterpiece; but it matters not whether the thing be best or least of its kind, the critic reveals himself in approval as well as in disapproval, and in the final resort masterpieces do not exist for him save among his own preferences. That is if we take the critic as one who concerns himself only with works of art, but such critics are only a class. Criticism is, at one time or another, practised by all of us, and we are to be known by our judgments upon men and things, for in every judgment a man judges himself if he has judged freely, or the canons of the law, if he has judged by legal prescription.

For the present such things are beside the question. Suffice it to say, then, that we reveal ourselves in our appraisal of others. There is more of Samuel Johnson in the "Lives of the Poets" than of Savage, Tickell, Yalden, Gay, Denham, Roscommon, Pope, Milton, and the rest, and Boswell reveals at least as much if not more of himself in the "Life of Johnson" as he does of his subject. When Ernest Renan writes about Jesus, he writes about Renan, as surely as Carlyle tells us about himself throughout the history of "The French Revolution." Thackeray interprets himself in

## CONCERNING PERSONALITIES

the "Book of Snobs" and we leave Charles Lamb's dissertations on old china, old dramatists, poor relations and roast sucking pig, knowing far more of Charles Lamb than of any of his entertaining themes. Some writers grow tired of writing about themselves, *apropos* of historical subjects and personalities; for instance, when Walter Pater grew tired of holding himself up for contemplation by means of literary portraits labelled "Joachim du Bellay" and "Leonardo da Vinci," he turned to the imaginary portrait, and in "Marius the Epicurean" revealed a conception of himself much as Michael, Lord of Montaigne, revealed himself in "An Apologie of Raymond Sebond." Modesty thus enforces upon such writers the methods of the novelists, the best of whom have discussed themselves in their novels with only a little more circumlocution than Walter Pater or Montaigne in their imaginary portraits and essays. And in a like manner one may show that practically the whole of literature is personal expression, intense or superficial, morbid or healthy, frank or veiled curiosity about self and its bearings and aspects.

The non-literary person is equally involved in this prevailing need of expression. But he rarely avows his need, and so, to hide anything that might suggest immodest conceit, he follows the line of least resistance by furtively appraising himself at the shrine of others. A man is known by the company he keeps; he is also known by the company he does not keep; and an age like ours, which lives largely by

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proxy, limiting the average power of personal expression, must set up idols of exaggerated personality, which act as public reservoirs from which all may drink. The average man of to-day drinks long draughts from these reservoirs and is not appeased. Is it possible that he is wrong in accepting what is public instead of what is intimate ? I am inclined to think so, and, whilst not wishing to underestimate the undeniable importance of a lively and jolly public life, it would seem that personality at its best needs other means of expression. It is far better, for instance, to know a man by his work than by his habits, for in your valuation of that you arrive at your true destination. An approval, an appreciation, adds something to your personality, by the very act of stating a preference. It not only tells you where you are, it tells others. Nevertheless, curiosity about our fellows does indicate that we are awake ; but curiosity is not an end in itself ; it is a means, an experience, building character, which is power, or destroying it. And any inquisitiveness about others, be they artists or mechanics, craftsmen or drudges, which does not refresh us by a new point of view, give a new sense of wonder, or act as a tonic to the soul, is so much waste energy.



## LORDS OF WHIM

**M**ODERN society is a curious tangle of conflicting ideas, sentiments and interests; and for that reason it gains in rapidity of movement what it loses in old-fashioned dignity. It possesses, for instance, none of that high serenity we associate with the Greek spirit. The aim of the Greeks was to connect ideas with common affairs. That was the meaning of all their great discussions. Athens at its best was a discussion towards such an end. No thought, not even the most sublime, is complete in itself, and the value of an idea can only be determined by the test of practice. The aim of the modern world should be the marriage of idea and action. The worship of abstract ideas, be they never so beautiful, must end. The day of the pedant is over. We are tired of his chatter. He is barren. Beauty, Freedom, Love, Art, have all withered in his hands; they have faded not for lack of argument—they have had abundance of that—but for lack of exercise. Let us rescue what remains from the pernicious influence before it is too late.

The evils of this separation of ideas from life are nowhere more apparent than in the use, or rather abuse, of the idea of Freedom. We are all devotees

## ALL MANNER OF FOLK

of Freedom : it is a dominant word in our literature. It is waved like a banner from a thousand political platforms every year, to the thunderous acclamation of hundreds of thousands of people who firmly believe themselves to be free. It is a word that thrills us like new love ; it is a word for which we have made great sacrifice ; it is a word over which we have broken heads and spilt blood. But tattered and torn though it be, like a flag which has been through many battles, dabbled with blood though it be and stained with tears, it still remains merely a word, a great mystical word nevertheless, yet hardly of any value to those who have it flaunted before them on so many occasions. It is like a fire-balloon, admirable and beautiful in the air, but incapable of descending to earth. Freedom has become a fetish ; a thing to be praised, to be patted on the back, to be adored, but not to be practised. You may burst into song about Freedom, but you may not be free.

But even worse things than lip service have happened to Freedom. Things have been called free which are not free. There are innumerable people who imagine Freedom to be synonymous with political liberty. Such people are blind or stupid. What else can we say of those who take the chaff and throw away the golden grain ? Political liberty is but one of the instruments of Freedom ; it can never be anything more. Real Freedom begins deep down in the consciousness of the individual ; it is the stuff of variation and growth, the fuel of life. " Freedom is

## LORDS OF WHIM

the will to be responsible for oneself," and anyone who interferes with that responsibility is an enemy of Freedom.

More than a generation ago John Stuart Mill, in a noble essay, set forth the uses of Freedom. His essay was both a lesson and a warning, but it is doubtful whether we have learnt the one, and certain that we have ignored the other. He saw clearly that constant interference with the desire for individual expression would inevitably lead to the destruction of the principle of growth in society ; and, although he laid considerable stress upon political despotism and the need for its removal, he was even more emphatic when he came to what Henry Thomas Buckle called "the despotism of custom." It is in that direction that we have ignored his gospel. We have claimed and attained more political liberty than we know how to use. But we are still warped and checked by the despotism of custom. Kings and elected persons are no longer the real enemies of society. The real enemies of society are custom and precedent. These are laughing in their impotent, cynical way at every effort towards Freedom. They have enthroned themselves on the seats of government. They dictate the laws and punish the defaulters. They have actually become the State, and under their rule society is losing its gaiety, its charm, its vitality ; and the loss of these things means the loss of the only treasures known to man. The despots of custom have substituted boredom for gaiety ; loudness and vulgarity

## ALL MANNER OF FOLK

for charm ; and, for vitality, feverishness and morbidity.

Nobody likes this change, but few are free to announce their dislikes, and those who are free are not brave. It requires something like religious valour to follow your inner consciousness to its last whim and eccentricity ; for that is what Freedom means. It is easy to do the thing everybody is doing ; it requires no thought, no faith, no effort. And here I beg of you not to misunderstand me : I do not want to rob people of the freedom to do what others are doing. Everybody requires that Freedom, and many will require no other. The Freedom I advocate includes that Freedom as well. It is necessary that everybody shall be free to do as they like, to follow their own inclinations in whatsoever direction they please, in so far as their action does not interfere with a like Freedom in others.

Mill denied the right of society, whether acting by legislative influence or by the influence of public opinion, to interfere with the conduct of any individual for the sake of his own good. But what is one man's meat is another's poison ; there is no rule for correcting the appetites of man. He must learn by experience. Society, then, may interfere with him for its own good, but not for his. " If his actions hurt them, he is, under certain circumstances, amenable to their authority ; if they only hurt himself, he is never amenable."

That is the only way to preserve those precious and



## LORDS OF WHIM

inestimable qualities which go to the making of individuality, for by those qualities the world is saved. Man is not entirely dependent upon known facts and needs. He is also a child of mystery and flame. He exists as much by continually finding himself out in innumerable revelations of whim and eccentricity as by the satisfaction of the primal needs. Nay, these are the primal needs, or rather the sum-total of all needs, the need for experiment. To those who are alive, every action, every thought, is in the nature of an experiment. Thought and deed go hand in hand, the twin instruments of those who recognise that a great deal more of life has yet to be revealed to man than the most visionary of men have yet imagined. We have, as yet, only touched the veriest hem of life's garment. It is a curious reflection upon our intelligence that such a view has not been generally accepted. But I fancy we are on the eve of a great awakening. We have allowed ourselves to be the slave of custom and every other form of external despotism too long. Ibsen desired a revolution in the spirit of man; many others now desire it, and the cumulative effect of these desires is bound, in the long run, to bring about open revolt. The precise line that revolution will take is not easy to see. "Never prophesy unless you know," said Mark Twain; and how can one anticipate the eccentricities of a free people? But this is certain: the revolt will not be political, it will not be industrial, it will not be ethical. Such revolutions are always with us. It will

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ignore just as heartily the dialectics of party politics as the statistics of industrial reformers and the barbed wire of the moralists. The revolution in the spirit of man will be brought about by fashion. Men and women one of these days will have the courage to be eccentric. They will do as they like—just as the great ones have always done. The word eccentric is a term of reproach and mild contempt and amusement to-day, because we live under a system which hates real originality. There never was a more uniform age than the present, in spite of our superficial variations. But such variations as we have to-day do not deceive those who look beneath the surface. In a society where everyone is alike, it is bad form to be eccentric ; and eccentricity is bad form to-day. “ Originality is dying away, and is being replaced by a spirit of servile and apish imitation.” That was said more than fifty years ago, and there has been no marked change for the better.

Eccentricity demands an effort, an effort approaching genius. That is why ordinary people resent it ; they are jealous of genius. They destroy it when they can, and what they cannot destroy they imitate and repeat to tediousness. For it should never be forgotten that every custom was once an eccentricity, and, in many cases, cases everyone will call to mind, the creators of the most adored conventions were served with contumely and sometimes death. One of these days we may learn wisdom. But even then it will not be everybody who will become eccentric. The real eccentric is a pioneer, an initiator ; he lives the

## LORDS OF WHIM

experimental life, testing every thought, every desire, every emotion, in the crucible of experience. When we become wise we shall, of course, do as he does, and, instead of being jealous of him when we fail, we shall give him all the Freedom we have imagined for ourselves in our best, our most fearless moments. The societies of the future may even go a step further ; they may establish about each individual a broad margin of Freedom for the expression of whim and fancy. A person's actions would not be judged by external standards, either moral or theological ; they would receive no judgment at all save when they threatened to destroy the statutory margins of Freedom which gave everyone the right to life and the right to enjoy life. The lords of whim would henceforth take their appointed places in life as leaders who did not rule, as instructors who did not teach. There is no realm where such margins for personal variety exist at present ; but such realms, which I like to believe do already begin to take form in the womb of the future, and her maps will record them, not as kingdoms or as states : these new dominions, at present over the seas of the imagination, will be known as Utopias.

## MASTERS OF NONSENSE

**I** DO not think it is good for anyone to be always sensible. Not that anyone is always sensible—on the contrary ; but most of us think we are. It is from this illusion that we require a holiday, in fact, several holidays, and, were I autocrat, I should make such holidays periodical, like the festivals of the Church ; for, as Sir Thomas Browne says, “ Many things are true in Divinity, which are neither inducible by reason, nor confirmable by sense.” Doubtless I shall be almost alone in this amiable wish, since we live in a practical and business-like age, and have little time to cut capers. Material success is our aim, and nonsense has nothing whatever to do with that aim. Nonsense is shy of success, even of its own ; and I believe this shyness is due to certain delicate and even fairylike qualities which are apt to become soiled in the market-place—as what thing does not ? One of the inevitable results of a strenuously material era is the brushing away of the more subtle and illusive qualities of life ; these suffer at the hands of popular success as butterflies’ wings suffer at the hands of him who is vandal enough to touch them. There is also an arrogance of material success—a swagger of certainty born of pride in accumulated



## MASTERS OF NONSENSE

substance—which spoils the taste for finer things. Those afflicted thus, for it is an affliction, surrounded though they are by what the world calls great possessions, possess naught. This is true not only of a man but of an age, for a man, whatever he may be, is, finally, the epitome of his age. The possession of a great many things, even the best of things, tends to blind one to the real value of anything. And the humour, and the pathos as well, of such an age as ours, which values a man according to the number of more or less troublesome things he possesses, is that it places what is called good sense above what is called nonsense. “Be sensible” is the advice we are all giving one another. And I think we are agreed that to be sensible is to be rational, shrewd, useful, proper, respectable, and even honest—when there is no great risk in our being otherwise. “Honesty,” we say, “is the *best* policy.” You see there is no nonsense about honesty being good in itself—it is simply *the best policy*, that is all.

This good sense would be called an English characteristic ; it has made us what we are, it has made us rich (at least some of us)—the kind of richness typified so frankly in the popular pictures of John Bull ; the kind of richness that made Napoleon sneer at us for a nation of shopkeepers. And we have little doubt that this sense is good sense, since it has given us those fine things, factories and ironclads, locomotives and guns, and banking accounts. But still, it would seem, and in spite of all these sensible

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things, that there are some things, in every sense their direct opposites, which bear a more convincing mark of immortality than the ingenious material achievements so much admired to-day. My modern and successful reader will, of course, say, "Nonsense!" And I shall not contradict him. It is nonsense, deliberate, unadulterated nonsense, but I am disposed to believe it is all the better for that. And, as if the Fates were on my side, it is not a little strange that this most sensible of all ages, this age of practical rationalism, should have invented, in the pauses of its pursuit of fleeting things, an art of nonsense. Maybe it is a reaction, but reaction is only bad when it throws back towards what is monstrous and unnecessary; but even if, say, the invention of the nonsense verse is reactionary, it is wisely so, for it reacts somewhat after the manner of a boomerang. It is our age laughing at itself, pulling wry faces at itself, if you will, realising perhaps shyly and without courage that this civilisation of ours is rather a joke, and perhaps a little top-heavy with seriousness.

There is undoubtedly some deeper relationship between what is called good sense and nonsense, something deeper than the popular conception of these things as the obverse and reverse of the same medal. If, for instance, we took longevity as the test of worthiness, nonsense would be found to rank higher than sense. And I, at least, should be forced to a similar conclusion were I to judge nonsense as a

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creator of disinterested happiness. But there are so many things in favour of nonsense that I should not be in the least surprised if, one of these days, that much-abused faculty were judged to be the final and consummate expression of sense, a kind of Nirvana of the intelligence. We even get a hint of this in our own sensible civilisation ; for, just as we have seen our national symbol is a rather gross and tubby person called John Bull, distinguished only by reason of his uncomfortable girth, so the most characteristic human product of our age is the millionaire. Surely these Falstaffs of finance are the climax of the sensible line of evolution, and, like all extremes, have met their opposites, though they have not yet admitted it ! But to avoid the charge of trifling with modern ideals, I shall not pursue this line of thought any further. Besides, are there not happier phases of my theme ?

One of these is the significant way in which those most exalted and nonsensical of creatures, our poets and dreamers, have often been evolved out of such sensible persons as mathematicians or even more laboriously learned people. Take the case of Edgar Allan Poe, who was a mathematical genius, and something of a conchologist. He might have remained a sensible devotee of science, only his genius was too much for him. It forced him to consider less rational things, and before it was too late he turned from the temple of mathematics and knocked at the door of the Muses, with results that have placed him in the forefront of

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the world's imaginative workers. There are many such instances in the annals of literary history. And there are other instances of men, like Rabelais and Dean Swift, who possessing the intuition of artists have used the language of nonsense to express the idea of sense, who have bedecked rational satire in irrational clothing, but Time, after his manner, stripping away the causes of the irony with the passing of the years, has treated with tender care the nonsensical form in which that irony was enshrined ; thus dropping a kindly veil of forgetfulness over the crabbed words of ages that are gone. Time has touched to immortality the conceptions of Gargantua, Pantagruel and Gulliver, leaving us to-day unmoved by any other quality but their fantastic charm.

But stranger still, and here history plays into my hands with something approaching magnanimity, the deliberate creators of nonsense for the sake of nonsense have turned to that noble work from what was acknowledged by their contemporaries to have been sound and sensible work ; but in spite of all offers of financial reward, and other temptations, they became masters of nonsense, and their whimsical ideas and images have given delight not only to past generations but to the present, and there is every sign that they will continue to give delight to many, and perhaps all, generations to come ; for nonsense rarely dies. Let me take but three examples of this type of genius : Lewis Carroll, Hans Andersen, and Edward Lear. The first of these was the creator of that classic



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of nonsense, "Alice in Wonderland," and yet how strange it is to think that Alice was a mere incident—an accident really—in a life which might easily have lost itself in a morass of theology and mathematics. Doubtless he took himself more seriously as the Rev. C. L. Dodgson, mathematician and theologian, than as Lewis Carroll, creator of Alice ; but who shall say that he did not touch infinity in the latter capacity ? His mathematics, upon which he prided himself, will be forgotten (even Euclid is becoming *passé*) ; his theology, which, doubtless, was much to him, will be dead : but Jabberwocky, the Mad Hatter, the Duchess, the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, and all their jolly fellows, will prance merrily down the ages, cutting happy capers for happy children and happier adults, until the crack o' doom.

Just as Lewis Carroll took himself seriously as a mathematician, so Hans Andersen took himself seriously as a novelist. But the spirit of Eternity judges neither one nor the other by such standards ; Eternity has touched neither their mathematics nor their novels with his magic wand. That wand has waved and descended gently upon Alice ; and it has waved with like immortal results over "The Ugly Duckling," "The Tinder Box," and "The Wild Swans."

But the most remarkable of all nonsense-artists is Edward Lear ; if the rest are masters of nonsense, he is surely our Prince of Nonsense. He has raised nonsense, nonsense pure and simple, nonsense free

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of all sense, morals, and prettiness, to the heights of great art. His work is the very apotheosis of nonsense ; he is “ the prophet of the utterly absurd, of the patently impossible and vain.”

His world was peopled with men and animals that never were on sea or land ; strange lights flared in his dreams, showing us a realm of prank here in the very heart of our rational day. He has given us the keys of the heaven of nonsense, and as we turn them in the doors and enter therein we breathe lightly and without care of the morrow, as though we were one with a rout of children dancing and shouting :

“ Sally go round the moon !  
Sally go round the sun !  
Sally go round the chimney-pot  
On a Sunday afternoon.”

And, characteristically, again, he raised himself to that eminence in the spare moments of a busy career devoted to the most obviously sensible things.

He permitted many years of a life, which might have been entirely devoted to nonsense, to be dissipated in ornithological studies and in the drawing and painting of birds and landscapes. Probably, like Lewis Carroll, he was prouder of his learned work on “ The Family of the Psittacidae ” than of “ The Pobble who has no Toes.” But, as it was in the cases of Lewis Carroll and Hans Andersen, the judgment of Time is against him.

Still, in spite of other endeavour, Edward Lear

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is the first to have made a fine art of nonsense. His work in that direction is irresponsibly defiant of all the scaffolding by which the intellect is supported, and though one is carried away on the wings of a chuckling fascination as one reads through his verses or looks at their illustrations, one is filled with a disturbing, mystical, yet exhilarating feeling that something unusual is happening, that a new sort of wisdom is being enunciated, a new order of life being revealed in this scamper of the wits. It is as though a dignified ritual, long become exanimate by repetition, had suddenly been reversed by an unseen but jocular power, and creating, instead of shallow laughter, fathomless joy.

Take his autobiographical verses, for example, and, sheer nonsense as they are, how much clearer a conception of the personality of Lear do they give us than any more sensible account of him could have done ?

“ How pleasant to know Mr Lear !

Who has written such volumes of stuff !  
Some think him ill-tempered and queer,  
But a few think him pleasant enough.

His mind is concrete and fastidious,  
His nose is remarkably big ;  
His visage is more or less hideous,  
His beard it resembles a wig.

He has ears, and two eyes, and ten fingers,  
Leastways if you reckon two thumbs ;  
Long ago he was one of the singers,  
But now he is one of the dumbs;

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He sits in a beautiful parlour,  
With hundreds of books on the wall ;  
He drinks a great deal of Marsala,  
But never gets tipsy at all.

He has many friends, laymen and clerical ;  
Old Foss is the name of his cat ;  
His body is perfectly spherical,  
He weareth a runcible hat.

He reads but he cannot speak Spanish,  
He cannot abide ginger-beer :  
Ere the days of his pilgrimage vanish,  
How pleasant to know Mr Lear ! ”

Much of Edward Lear's work in the realm of nonsense is in the verse which has become the established medium of nonsensical utterance :

“ There was an old man who supposed  
The street door was partially closed,  
But some very large rats  
Ate his coat and his hats  
While the futile old gentleman dozed.”

But Edward Lear's most masterly work does not lie in the classical nonsense verse, nor yet in those delightfully futile sketches by means of which he illustrated his books of nonsense. Rather is it to be found in that series of ballads which, for whimsical fancy and deliberate abandonment of all reasonableness, stands matchless and supreme, the very negation of the rationale of things.

The finest of these ballads is certainly “ The Pelican Chorus,” although its excellence does not lie so en-



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tirely in the domain of nonsense as in the setting of the quality of nonsense in picturesque surroundings. The chorus itself, whimsical though it is, translates what ought to be Pelicanese into a kind of pidgin-English, which one can easily imagine to be the nearest approximation in human language of the thoughts and emotions of the pelican. There is, in fact, as the reader will readily comprehend, a strong resemblance between the personal appearance of the pelican and the quaint words of the chorus, and if it is the expression of the unseen self, then the natural historical truth of the chorus is obvious :

“ Ploffskin, Pluffskin, Pelican jee !  
We think no birds so happy as we !  
Plumpskin, Ploshkin, Pelican jill !  
We think so then, and we thought so still ! ”

Yes, when Lear tells me of the assembling of these impossible birds on their “ long bare islands of yellow sand,” I am convinced that, whether they sing this pleasant verse or not, it is quite obvious that they ought to do so ; and it is an oversight on the part of nature if they do not. But I am somewhat at a disadvantage in the matter. I cannot speak with authority, because my experience of pelicans is confined to those at the Zoo. They certainly did not quote Lear. But what would you expect of creatures that live in a paddock ? And now I come to think of it, I noticed that each of those curious guests of the Royal Zoological Society did wear the absorbed expression

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peculiar to people who want to catch some thought which has just slipped the memory. Captivity had evidently afflicted them with aphasia, just as it afflicts many other creatures of our civilisation. The pelicans at the Zoo are sad birds, and now I know why—they are trying to recollect “The Pelican Chorus,” which dangles in their memories just beyond grasping-point.

For the highest nonsense, however, we must turn to the immortal “Pobble who has no Toes”:

“ The Pobble who has no toes  
Had once as many as we ;  
When they said, ‘ Some day you may lose them all ’ ;—  
He replied, ‘ Fish fiddle de-dee ! ’—  
And his Aunt Jobiska made him drink  
Lavender water tinged with pink,  
For she said, ‘ The World in general knows,  
There’s nothing so good for a Pobble’s toes ! ’ ”

and to the equally great “ Mr and Mrs Discobbolos,”

“ Mr and Mrs Discobbolos  
Climbed to the top of a wall,  
And they sat to watch the sunset sky,  
And to hear the Nupiter Piffkin cry,  
And the Biscuit Buffalo call.  
They took up a roll and some camomile tea,  
And both were as happy as happy could be—  
Till Mrs Discobbolos said,—  
‘ Oh ! W ! X ! Y ! Z !  
It has just come into my head—  
Suppose we should happen to fall ! ! ! !  
Darling Mr Discobbolos ! ’ ”

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and to "The Quangle Wangle's Hat":

" On the top of the Crumpetty Tree  
The Quangle Wangle sat,  
But his face you could not see,  
On account of his beaver Hat!  
For his hat was a hundred and two feet wide,  
With ribbons and bibbons on every side,  
And bells, and buttons, and loops, and lace,  
So that nobody ever could see the face  
Of the Quangle Wangle Quee."<sup>2</sup>

In these three poems Edward Lear is seen at his best. In these poems one meets all those strange creations of his which meet their peers only in the Jabberwock and the Mock Turtle of Lewis Carroll. You are introduced to them all at once, for all of them meet at a grand re-union on the amazing hat of the still more amazing and mysterious Quangle Wangle. The Fimble Fowl, with the corkscrew leg :

" And the Golden Grouse came there,  
And the Pobble who has no toes—  
And the small Olympian Bear—  
And the Dong, with the luminous nose:  
And the Blue Baboon, who played the flute,  
And the Orient Calf from the Land of Tute,  
And the Attery Squash and the Bisky Bat,  
All came and built on the lovely hat  
Of the Quangle Wangle Quee."<sup>2</sup>

There is an exalted futility about these poems suggestive of things as final and as certain as any

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imaginable. One cannot explain them, they baffle and elude and convince like

“ ’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe ;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.”

Who are all these strange creatures, and why do they enter into our consciousness against all reason ? Why do we sympathise as deeply with the absurd whimsies of Mr and Mrs Discobbolos as we do with the adventures of Mr Pickwick or the love of Lucy Desborough and Richard Feverel ? Why should the incomprehensible Pobble creep into our lives on such a wave of sympathy ? Or why, to take another expression of nonsense, should we have a deeper if more furtive regard for Jabberwocky than we have for the language of Shakespeare ? Such questions are as difficult as Pilate’s “ What is truth ? ”

These things are nonsense, unquestionably, but, as the lady in *Patience* says: “ Oh, what precious nonsense ! ” But nonsense does not always find expression in the same way. We even see hints of it in certain of the phenomena of wild life. Nature was certainly working in the same vein, though expressing it through a different medium, when she created the Gecko, the Duckbill Platypus, and the Tortoise ; but it is a moot point whether even she improves upon the Quangle Wangle Quee.

But in spite of it all, nonsense is one of the few



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things modern learning does not attempt to explain. Nonsense exists ; it is delightful : that is all. Furthermore, it is not sense, and perhaps therefore we should rejoice in the fact that it has escaped learned analysis ; not even Nonsense could withstand that.

In the hands of Edward Lear and his followers it is becoming not only proud of its isolation, but self-asserting, articulate, and, like the mind of Mr Lear, "concrete and fastidious."

We are all, in fact, beginning to find, as Alice did, that what sounds like nonsense is no ground for objection. You will remember how she was making up her mind to run to meet the Red Queen in the reasonable way of going forward, for the Red Queen was ahead of her. "You can't possibly do that," said the Rose. "I should advise you to walk the other way." Alice refused to follow this advice, and speedily lost her way, and it was not until she acted upon the nonsensical that she eventually met the Red Queen.

This adventure in Wonderland might well serve as a parable, a hint of that higher thing than sense lying hidden in the heart of the absurd. We know the legend of Punch is a laughing tragedy truer than our truth, and on the same lines there may be long vistas of intelligence, whole realms of consciousness, whose nature mere sense cannot penetrate. Nonsense may be the striving of consciousness towards newer ways of expressing life ; it may indicate the final breakdown of intellect and reason, and the beginning of a fresh idea, the childhood of a new world ; the proof, in fact, of

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man's unwritten belief that what can be proved is not worth proving.

Man is an irrational creature, and the essence of the human comedy is concerned with his attempts to be otherwise. Doubtless the comedy will continue—there will be no last act. So I do not look to nonsense as one looks to some reforming or revolutionary power. It is not that. Indeed, I am not so sure that I would alter the human comedy ; I might wish it more varied—but on the whole it is good enough until we are more conscious of its purpose. Nonsense has nothing to do with progress ; it is as unchanging as it is uncertain, as young as it is old. Its value lies in its futility. But by showing us the absurdity of things, nonsense may help to keep us usefully sane ; by checking ultimate consistency it may help to keep us alive.

## OF THE SELF-SUFFICIENT

**I**T is never quite healthy to dwell overmuch upon the ailments of the human machine. They like it too much, and ailments are like public men, they grow by being noticed. At the same time I am not so short-sighted as to be unable to see that heart-to-heart talks about the behaviour of our bodies are not, in their own way, very enthralling for those who are adepts at the business. For myself such subjects have small charm ; perhaps I lack the skill that might endow them with the necessary wonder and delight. But there is one ailment which I should like to discuss in a manner befitting its importance. It is an ailment by no means obscure, and so prevalent as to be free of all tiresome suspicions of being unique ; it is familiar, entertaining and irritating ; none of us are immune from attack, but, unlike most ailments, one may suffer from its depredations for many years, and often for ever, without being aware of the fact. But with your fellows it is otherwise ; they know when you are affected. However sly, however insidious, however furtive it may be in yourself, it is patent and even noisome to others. This ailment is known popularly as swelled head. Now swelled head is a complaint that afflicts people of all sorts and sizes,

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and of all capacities ; and it is by no means, as circumstances might lead one to imagine, a peculiarity of our own age. I meet all sorts of people with it, from the greatest to the most insignificant, and I do not know in which it is the more offensive. Perhaps in the former, for there is nothing more objectionable in this world than the great man who knows that he is great ; than the able man who is over-conscious and over-proud of his ability. When a commonplace person, one possessed neither of abundant genius nor of great ability, suffers from swelled head, we ought not to be offended, we ought to be amused. To be offended is to join issue with the offenders ; it is as though you were fearful that they might, as it were, jump your claim.

So far as my memory goes, most great men have been afflicted with the complaint. There are exceptions, like Julius Cæsar, who have escaped it, but they are a hopeless minority. Napoleon had it, and it wrought his ruin ; Balzac had it, and so had Charles Dickens. It is a part of the stock-in-trade of most of our poets and painters, and strikingly obvious among our actors. Great soldiers run the poets and painters very closely. But in modern times swelled head has been given a whimsical term of acceptance by many eminent literary men. This has given it something of a new standing in the world of to-day ; it has raised a despised ailment to the dignity of an art. One ought not to be surprised at that, for it is not the first time in history that a disease has become an art. The new



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art began in this country with Oscar Wilde, and the innumerable *poseurs* who have followed boldly or mincingly in his steps. Mr Bernard Shaw is a past-master in the art ; but you never can tell when he has his tongue in his cheek and when not. A great deal of his personal arrogance may be assumed for the purpose of publicity ; but it is also true that Mr Bernard Shaw is not in the habit of trifling with his own high opinion of himself. He is intensely proud of, and untiringly interested in G. B. S. When he couples himself with Shakespeare he means it. This attitude towards the public and history exasperates many people, but for myself I am by no means annoyed. The men who have made swelled head an art give me great delight, it is such a change from the mock-humility of their predecessors. Not only from the mock-humility of their predecessors, but from the mock-humility of so many public men of the moment. Much of the self-restraint and personal modesty of the literature of to-day is but the cloak of an arrogance which, in the writers themselves, is little short of morbid. The writings of such people, therefore, lack the wholesomeness of frankly admitted pride, as well as the humour of that other form of pride which is now an art. They are like peacocks who have not the courage to admit the beauty of their own tails. And the matter is aggravated by the fact that this lack of courage, this cowardice, for such it is, curdles their natures with resentment and all uncharitableness, unless they have succeeded in wheedling others to do

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their trumpeting for them, which many of them have done with striking success. There are, of course, genuinely modest writers, who express themselves with a modesty which is a part of their nature, leaving the results for the world to discover, and waiting that far-off divine event with dignity and patience. But they are so few as to be negligible.

Every man who is thoroughly alive to the day is alive first of all to his own importance. He possesses to some extent what is called swelled head. He need not be offensive ; that depends upon the quality of his personality. A likeable man is not made the less likeable because of the assertiveness of his conceit. We do not object to the pride of a peacock, neither do we admire the lowliness of a cur. But swelled head needs no apologists—has it not had its philosophers ? During the last three-quarters of a century there has been a constant propaganda of arrogance, which has not ceased even to-day. Stirner, Nietzsche, Emerson, Thoreau, Wilde, Shaw—a far-flung line handing on the torch of egoism which was carried also by Heraclitus, Marcus Antoninus and Montaigne. The only difference to-day is that the young men and the maidens are reading. The old wine goeth into new bottles. “ I am owner of my might, and I am so when I know myself as unique.” So purred Stirner to his soul. But as he visualised nothing in the spread of his world, “ his creative nothing,” modern swelled heads may be shy of him. Not so, however, with Nietzsche,

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whose philosophic arrogance has led many simple souls into the belief that there are short cuts to personal power. "To learn how to love oneself is the finest, cunningest, and most patient of arts." Many think it is also easy, but Zarathustra smiles at this innocence. Perhaps, after all, neither Stirner nor Nietzsche are meat for swelled head in its popular form; the proper food is Emerson. Surely no other writer has caused so much self-approval as he. One cannot recall one's first reading of that wonderful essay on "Self Reliance" without a thrill. It is the recalling of an exalted moment, an experience—like one's first swim, one's first love, one's first sight of London, one's first appearance in print! The magical sentences, commands and aphorisms, bit deep into the soul like acid into the etcher's plate, and years afterwards they come back fragrant of youth, and hope and courage. "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men—that is genius." "A man must carry himself in the presence of all opposition, as if everything were titular and ephemeral but he." "Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind." "A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him, I wish that he should wish to please me." "Insist on yourself; never imitate." And above all, that generous solatium, that unique nest of aspiration and conceit, "To be great is to be misunderstood." What ardent thanks have gone forth to Emerson for those words! And

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what a number of years it takes us to unlearn what we thought they meant.

But in spite of all this justification by philosophy, swelled head is not among the admitted ailments—not even among those who read Emerson and the rest. They, these artistic and intellectual folk, are too modest; they feel guilty about their pride. In business it is otherwise. Business is simpler than art, and swelled head has its recognised place therein. I believe it has a definite economic value. Anyhow, a great many people with the complaint seem to hold the reins of commerce. Indeed, I will go so far as to say that the man who lacks a swelled head had better keep out of Cheapside or Throgmorton Street, unless he is content with a maximum salary of, say, forty shillings per week. Still, not every wearer of a swelled head attains to commercial eminence. There are failures. But the business man possessing every business virtue, and lacking swelled head, is in danger of being crowded out. Yes, swelled head has entirely ceased to be a disease in commerce, it has become craft, what might be described as the craft of window-dressing: skill in so displaying your personal goods and achievements that others may see them, and approve in the same way as you yourself approve. It is the faculty of letting your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify you—at so much per cent. A great deal depends, of course, upon your having the goods to display, and even then the practitioner of the craft risks many dangers. To carry



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a swelled head is, in a sense, to court destruction. But, on the other hand, if you do not court destruction you will never achieve anything. Achievement is born of risk ; if you throw your cap in the air for very joy there is a danger that you may not catch it, and that it will get damaged ; but that does not mean that it is not worth the risk. All those who achieve anything worth achieving, and I do not say that commercial success is one of those things, have done so by always being prepared to burn their ships. That, you may say, has no apparent connection with swelled head, but if you do say it you are wrong. If by wearing a swelled head you risk the wrath of those who think they have no use for such an article, or of those whose reason is controlled by their modesty, you are certainly taking risks. For even granting that swelled head in any form is offensive, it is never half so offensive as the habit of toadying for the sake of prestige or emolument.

All of this may be a matter of taste. And the prevalence of swelled head in the modern world may mean that the majority of people either like it for its own sake, or like to be taken in by it. I stand with neither. Swelled head never deceives me, but on the other hand it never offends me ; still, I do not think I will go so far as to say I like it. It amuses me. And is it not right to be amused at the peccadilloes of men ? With swelled head it is even necessary, else you are in danger of infection. By your wrath you convict yourself of the complaint and become a joke

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for the wise. But whichever way we look at it, let us not fall into the error of imagining that it is only the little people, the insignificant people, the people incapable of achievement, who suffer from swelled head. If we do, we shall be very wrong, because we shall be achieving neither its cure nor its accomplishment ; nor shall we see the thing as it is, and so attain laughter. Let us be quite frank, even if it come to admitting that our own darlings of history, nay, even our own favourite novelists or favourite actors, wore swelled heads during all their waking hours. But if we want to be very nasty, if we want to give vent to our indignation and empty our spleen upon the proud wearers of that article, we may always remember that swelled head thrives best of all in a lunatic asylum.

## VAGABONDS

**F**EW of us escape at one time or another the call of the open road ; not only in summer, when the sun glints over the hedgerows, turning " the long brown path " into a mysterious and seductive highway leading undoubtedly to El Dorado or Utopia, but in winter as well, when the trees are bare, but none the less beautiful, and the blood courses through the veins in sympathy with the rhythm of a swinging pace.

There is something primal and necessary in this fascination. The call of the open road is a mysterious call, springing out of the exuberance and the passion of life. Everyone hears it sooner or later. It inspires the schoolboy to run away from school, sends rich men careering over continents in motor cars, and sets the clerk a-dreaming of his annual holiday : that small taste of freedom which is all he ever knows.

I do not doubt that this call of the open road is the call of the wild. It is Nature bidding man re-create himself by spending himself after her large and prodigal manner. Without some such call civilisation might bring about our ruin. Thoreau, who loved the open road better than most men, saw in wildness the preservation of the world, even though that wildness

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might make vagabonds of us all. And side by side with most people's love of the open road there is a furtive love of the vagabond. Poets have grown sentimental over his apparent abandonment of care, and reformers of our luxurious habits have imagined some context between the vagabond life and philosophic simplicity. But ordinary men do not want the simple life so much as the free life. After a spell of civilisation, they find themselves, as it were, tugging at their moorings; they want to break away and drive free for a while, and they half believe that vagabondage is the method.

Whether they be right or wrong, there is something to be said for the idea that all great endeavour is the result of the abandon which often expresses itself in the rake and the vagabond. The dream of El Dorado may be no more than Nature's lure to the wild. The man who has no stomach for the attainment of his desires is by that dream urged mysteriously into the world of active life when lack of spirit might otherwise bid him stay at home. But it does not follow that every wastrel is a hero in the cause of natural freedom.

At least, we may say that our pleasure in contemplating the vagabond and his kind is in response to a very real need. It is not so much that we see in him the incarnation of happiness, still less a model of human perfection; what we do feel is, that the vagabond is participating in the full current of life. That, of course, may wreck him, just as it may wreck us also if we follow in his steps, but a spice of danger is an added



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lure to the brave heart. The dangers of football, of polo, of mountaineering or soldiering never yet made those sports unpopular, for the sufficient reason that the only life worth living is the life which is well spiced with risk. "Chance, in the last resort is God," said Anatole France. The vagabond, if not always in the midst of romantic adventure, has always got his back to the wall; and that alone is an inspiring thing for the contemplation of all healthy people. Weary and unkempt as he usually is, in him we see, no matter how dimly, the spirit of the hero, the hero who does not care whether he succeeds or no, the hero who does not desire to be intimidated by success. Behind the most grotesque tatterdemalion of the highway may exist the romantic desire to face odds, to test personal prowess, to have no possessions, that eating and drinking may be the merrier because of the fight. The vagabond of romance symbolises such an ideal if he symbolises anything. Life for him is not a thing to be owned, but to be used; he does not stake out a claim in the world, but enjoys all claims, eternally moving onwards, seeing nothing anywhere "but what may be reached and passed."

The correspondence between conduct and sympathy, however, is often strangely paradoxical. There is, for instance, no doubt about the desire of most of us for what we are agreed is an exemplary life. That is what we are taught at school and, in fact, what we really believe to be correct. But there is no doubt also that beneath all our very sincere

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practice and advocacy of responsible virtues, we are all more or less susceptible to the charm of irresponsibility. It strikes a romantic note to which our hearts are readily attuned. Such sympathy is recorded in our works of art, particularly in literature, where so many of the most delightful figures are vagabonds of one kind or another, and so much happy writing is inspired by a spirit of abandonment. The works of writers who have something of the vagabond in their souls invariably inspire friendly devotion in their readers.

And all this sentiment of affection exists in spite of our persecution of every practical attempt at real vagabondage. Vagabonds were not always persecuted; but to-day the very word, outside of literature, is suspect. A vagabond is no longer merely a wanderer; he is an idler and a worthless fellow to boot. Still even that does not kill our inner faith in at least his romantic claims to sympathy. Our sympathies do go out more readily to the good-natured vagabond, be he tramp, troubadour, gipsy, mountebank, soldier of fortune, or ordinary rake, than to the circumspect person of equal generosity.

It is not without significance that so much of our favourite reading is about rakes and vagabonds; such a thing is no mere fad, it is a sign. Think of Falstaff and Autolycus; of Jasper Petulengro and Sinfia Lovell; of Ragged Robin and Paragot. There are few pleasanter literary memories than these. Without doubt, Falstaff was a disreputable rogue, but somehow we prefer him to Henry IV., and in the

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same way wild Prince Hal is nearer to our hearts than that strutting rhetorician, Henry V. In our own times, Dickens, who knew popular tastes so well, created a whole range of characters each of whom has a like freedom from care. Even the immortal Pickwick is something of a vagabond, leaving aside Barnaby Rudge, the Jarleys, and all his delightful roving coachmen and strolling players. Dick Swiveller is one of the most charming people in fiction ; and that rake who became a hero, Sidney Carton, one of the most adored—especially by women ; although I have my suspicions that Sidney Carton was created by Mr Martin Harvey, and not by Charles Dickens.

In the same way we are drawn towards the romantic rogues and vagabonds of history ; towards kings who have had the wander-thirst and gone forth seeking adventure, like Richard the Lion-hearted ; or to poets of wild, unreckoning ways, like François Villon and Byron, to troubadours and the student minstrels of Provence and Italy ; or again to the wandering friars of mediæval times. And many good folk grow enthusiastic over the careless Bohemianism which is the reputed life of artists. Nothing can rob the middle classes of this myth, and although they have many opportunities of learning that most poets and artists nowadays pride themselves on their respectability, the nimbus of romance has been placed about the brows of the Bohemian, and there it will remain.

There is romance even in the familiar tramp of the

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highway, although he is considerably shorn of his glamour in these strenuous days when we have raised the accident which has made it necessary for most of us to work for a living into an ideal virtue. The idea is preposterous and the root of much evil.

But the genuine tramp shirks work on principle. Our laborious and regular ideals are not his. We like work, or pretend we do ; he hates it, and has the courage of his convictions. He is quite practical and quite frank, and would never do an honest stroke of work year in year out, unless absolutely forced to do so. So long as he can get food and clothing to satisfy his needs by simply asking for them, he fulfils his self-chosen vocation. When he is hard pressed by evil fortune, he stoops to an odd job which, since such things are beneath him, he does not hesitate to scamp as much as possible. Yet, object to the fellow as we may, down in the bottom of our hearts there is something which responds not unkindly to the genuine tramp. We may pity the casual and hope to abolish him, but although we may hate the real tramp on principle, we cannot finally despise him.

England, like all lands with a failing peasantry, is a poor place for tramps, and yet with a little more practical sympathy what a paradise it might be for them, especially in the summer months ! In Ireland, however, where national ideals are less material, he has a better time ; in fact, in the less commercialised parts of that country he is still considered a human being with rights and even a



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destiny. He can usually depend upon hospitality from the peasants, and, in return, he gives them of his store of worldly lore ; often he is a teller of tales, and he is in some cases the inheritor of the traditions of the old Irish minstrelsy.

That the tramp is still a considerable figure in the life of Ireland may be seen by the large and, on the whole, friendly part he occupies in modern Irish plays and poems. One remembers the clever vagabond who is the central figure of W. B. Yeats' play, *A Pot of Broth*. But more particularly does one recollect the delightful tramps in the plays of J. M. Synge, tramps who are created not as romantic ideas, but as records of Irish life and character. In these tramps we see personified real joy in the simple and mysterious things of nature—those things which come very close to what we call romance ; who represent and seem to have convinced their compatriots of the fact that the tramp's lack of the desire of earthly goods is not altogether a vice.

In all countries there are these strange beings, living in the midst of the people but not of them : the weary Tramp of England, the nonchalant Hobo of America, the bronzed Sundowner of Australia, the sad-visaged Gorioun of Russia, no less than the more intimate associate of the peasantry, as the tramp usually is, in pastoral countries such as Ireland. But each in his way carries on the tradition of freedom, if only the almost lost tradition of freedom from the tyranny of owning things.

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The call of the Open Road has long since made the amateur tramp a more and more familiar figure of our highways. People who live in houses are beginning to realise that there is no other way of seeing a country. Tramping is the most subtle and satisfying way of assimilating what beauty or charm a land may have ; and, apart from the mere sensuous delight of the thing, there is no surer road to health of body or of mind. Tramping, indeed, has become one of the arts, and, like all art, it comes naturally to some, whilst others need tuition before they can use their materials with that certainty and dexterity necessary to the creation of joy out of good works. The open road has become practical politics. The opportunity of meeting life face to face, of tasting the joys of earth, comes to all of us now and then. Those who take it are wise ; those who foster and woo the intimate call of the wild are wiser still. There are few habits so well worth cultivating as this habit of occasional lapse from the upholstery of civilised life, for in vagabondage we merge into the very source of life itself ; civilisation is but its reflection, and often it is the reflection of a distorting glass. The tonic of the open road puts us once more in tune with reality.

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**N**OT very many years ago Mr W. B. Yeats was staying at one of those little hotels in the Latin Quarter of Paris which are frequented chiefly by poor students, and whilst there he met an Irishman, who for economical reasons had taken a room at the top of the house. His name was John M. Synge, and he was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. There was a considerable dash of the wander-spirit in his personality, and this had set him roaming among the more picturesque people of Europe; he had played his fiddle to Italian sailors and Bavarian woodmen, and heard in exchange for his music such stories as these folk had to tell. His desire now was to become a writer, and he showed Yeats some specimens of the work he had done. These early works must have impressed the poet in some way, although not exactly as the young writer expected. There was evidently imaginative power in them, but this was hidden behind a screen of that artificiality, so prevalent at the time, which was born of pondering overmuch on methods of expression.

Yeats had just come from the remote Arran Islands, and the people living on those grey rocks had filled his imagination with the unexpressed

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wonder and mystery of hard and simple lives. There, he knew, was a life known only to the few, and as yet untouched by the elderly seriousness of civilisation. It was a life self-contained and distinct, expressing itself still in the language of the Irish folk, and, where it broke away from that tradition, in an English of unique and beautiful phrase and strangely musical cadence. The naive hardihood of the lives of the people of Arran had never been interpreted for the outer world, and when Yeats had read Synge's youthful poems and impressionist essays, foreign as they were to the purpose, he said to him, "Give up Paris; you will never create anything by reading Racine, and Arthur Symons will always be a better critic of French literature. Go to the Arran Islands. Live there as if you were one of the people themselves; express a life that has never found expression."

Synge took this advice to heart and went to Arran, and there he lived among the people as one of themselves, playing his fiddle in their cottages, listening to their stories, roaming the hillsides with the young folk, and putting out to sea in the frail craft of the fishermen. Later he went to Galway and to Kerry, where he also lived as one of the people, and in this way served his apprenticeship to that drama which now bears the stamp of his intimacy with the last trace of primal society in the complex civilisation of the British Isles. Yeats was right when he ordered his compatriot back to Ireland; the definite quality of his imagination, which it took another genius to





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recognise, would have been wasted in the interpretation of the cosmopolitan life and literature of Paris or London.

There is no formula for the craft of good writing. Each writer has his own incommunicable method, based upon his own idiosyncrasy and born of his own experience. Another may give him a hint as to direction, but on the pathless way of the craft of letters he must be his own guide. Those who stand apart for a moment and look calmly upon the finished piece of writing will, however, always note that fine literature has at least three indispensable qualities. He will note that it is compact of a certain exactness of observation coupled with depth of feeling and imagination, expressed in appropriate words, deftly woven together in lucid and inevitable sentences. This trinity, however, like another, is not diverse, but one. It conveys a feeling of permanency and a sense of vision; and none of its parts appear to be conscious of their own separate existence. Such an effect is produced by the plays of John M. Synge. They have the homogeneous note which we associate with fine literature, apart from any distinction they may have as the expression of an unique view of life or any value they may have as an expression of the Irish national sense.

I was attracted by their rich literary flavour before I had read any of the plays in book-form. It was at a performance of the Irish National Theatre in a provincial city that I first made acquaintance of a

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play by Synge. That play was *Riders to the Sea*. A new note had just been sounded on the English stage by the Vedrenne-Barker performances at the Court Theatre, which were the first maintained public outcome of such private efforts as the Stage Society, the New Century Theatre, and other propagandist dramatic societies on the one hand, and such organisations as the Elizabethan Stage Society on the other hand. But important as I knew these undertakings to be, and splendid as their accomplishment had been, the performance of *Riders to the Sea* in the simple manner of the Irish players made me realise that our Celtic kinsmen had done something both deeper, more direct—more dramatic, in fact—than anything in our own achievement. Here is tragedy, I remember thinking, tragedy as inevitable as the tragedy of Greece, yet brief and apposite, after the modern taste, and, above all, it was modern in spirit—an interpretation of a part of the life of our own day, yet so removed from the actualities of the rough-and-tumble of commercial civilisation as to have all the remoteness of classical tragedy.

*Riders to the Sea* is so brief that it is almost a tragic epigram, but it contains the whole of the direct tragedy of life—that beating of the human heart against the heart of death which is the essence of the tragic idea. It is just the story of an old woman of Arran, the child of fisherfolk and the mother of fishermen, who has lost all her sons in the sea. The large, pitiless sea surges round the little play as it



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surges about the tiny Arran Islands. But this sea is really the protagonist of the play ; the sea is Death, beating remorseless wings against the lives of these fisherfolk. There is the little cottage with its nets, oilskins, and spinning wheel, its womenfolk in their simple, flame-coloured skirts of homespun fabric, and the old mother bent with grief and years. The sea has taken her last son from her, and his poor body lies there amid poor surroundings and the keening of the women. I know of nothing more poignant than the closing passage of the play, when the old woman recites the names of her sons and resigns herself to the bitterness of her lot. The dead body of Bartley lies there, and as she contemplates it with the sorrow of a mother inured to such sorrow, the clothes of her favourite son Michael, who has been drowned far away from land, are brought to her. She rises slowly and spreads these beside the dead body, and after sprinkling them with holy water turns the empty cup downwards on the table, and in words which are like the interpretation of a sob, accompanied by the rise and fall of the death-keen, she murmurs her irreparable woe :

“They’re all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley’s soul, and on Michael’s soul, and on the souls of Sheamus, and Patch, and Stephen, and Shawn ; and may he have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of everyone is left in the world.

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Michael has a clean burial in the far north by the grace of Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave, surely. What more can we want than that ? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied."

In these words does the old woman express the attitude of those who are born to anguish by the hazard of their calling, and whose direct faith helps them to look upon the mysterious incident of death with a fortitude which is in itself tragic.

But Synge is not essentially a tragic dramatist. He has written six plays, and four of them are in a spirit of comedy, though all are touched with an unfamiliar tragic note: a suggestion of an impelling will outside the will of men, yet strangely coinciding with their inmost desires. All the leading people of his plays are visionaries, and yet they are not usually unique people: they are figures taken, as it would seem, at random from the varied tangle of humanity. They have a distinction, however, above ordinary folk—or perhaps I should say Teutonic folk—they are always ready to sacrifice immediate habits for some remote but essential need. These tramps and peasants and fisherfolk, even the wild kinsfolk of *Deirdre of the Sorrows*, see beyond the mundane, and their chief and ever-refreshing characteristic is their readiness to slip their conventional moorings and to sail into the unknown.

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The contest of the drama is the clash between vision and actuality, between the call of unfulfilled desire and the demands of ordinary humdrum life. In *The Well of the Saints* the two blind beggars, amid all the superficial coarseness of their days and the ribald words that fall from their lips, live in a world of wonder and beauty free from the disillusionment of sight. They live in a vision which they prefer to actuality. "I'm thinking it's a good right ourselves have to be sitting blind, hearing a soft wind turning round the little leaves of the spring and feeling the sun, and we not tormenting our souls with the sight of the grey days, and the holy men, and the dirty feet is trampling the world."

Still more is the call of that dreamland, which, after all, is the only reality seen in *The Shadow of the Glen*, where the young peasant woman leaves her old husband, to walk the world with wonder and romance, as personified in a tramp who comes into her dull life on the lonely hillside like a knight-errant. And in this his first play we are introduced into an atmosphere of impassioned enchantment, which, rising and falling with the emotions of the people of the play, bursts into those flowers of speech which are without compare in English literature, save in certain passages of the Authorised Version of the Bible. "Come along with me now, lady of the house," says the tramp in *The Shadow of the Glen*, "and it's not my blather you'll be hearing only, but you'll be hearing the herons crying out over

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the black lakes, and you'll be hearing the grouse and the owls with them, and the larks and the big thrushes when the days are warm; and it's not from the like of them you'll be hearing a tale of getting old like Peggy Cavanagh, and losing the hair off you, and the light of your eyes, but it's fine songs you'll be hearing when the sun goes up, and there'll be no old fellow wheezing, the like of a sick sheep, close to your ear." But this fine prose, with its definite musical balance, is not confined to *The Shadow of the Glen*: it is one of the distinguishing features of all Synge's plays. Thus in *Deirdre of the Sorrows* we have passages like this one in which Naisi woos the willing Deirdre: "Then we'll go away. It isn't I will give your like to Conchubor, not if the grave was dug to be my lodging when a week was by. The stars are out, Deirdre, and let you come with me quickly, for it is the stars will be our lamps many nights and we abroad in Alban, and taking our journeys among the little islands in the sea. There has never been the like of the joy we'll have, Deirdre, you and I, having our fill of love at the evening and the morning till the sun is high." Perhaps the best examples of Synge's rare gift as a master of prose are to be found in *The Playboy of the Western World*. "It's well you know what call I have. It's well you know it's a lonesome thing to be passing small towns with the lights shining sideways when the night is down, or going in strange places with a dog noising before you and a dog noising behind, or drawn to the cities where



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you'd hear a voice kissing and talking deep love in every shadow of the ditch, and you passing on with an empty, hungry stomach failing from your heart." And again, telling Pegeen how lonesome he is, Christy Mahon says, "I was lonesome all times, and born lonesome, I'm thinking, as the moon of dawn." The riches of this prose and the ease with which it takes the form of the natural rhythm of emotion make it an ideal language for expressing the moods of love, and Synge has taken full advantage of this. In few English prose dramas has the language of love received so beautiful a setting as in the plays of John M. Synge, and to find its equal even in the poetic drama we have to go back to Shakespeare. Synge, however, makes no claims as inventor of the prose with which his name must ever be associated. Speaking of the luxurious phraseology of *The Playboy of the Western World* he acknowledges his indebtedness to the folk-imagination of the west of Ireland people. "Anyone who has lived in real intimacy with the Irish peasantry will know," he says, "that the wildest sayings and ideas in this play are tame, indeed, compared with the fancies one may hear in any little hillside cabin in Geesala, or Carraroe or Dingle Bay." But it required the genius of a Synge to turn the natural magic of this phraseology into art, and by doing so he discovered an Irish language which was at once beautiful and alive, whilst doctrinaire nationalists were making vain efforts to raise the ancient Erse from the dead.

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John M. Synge is a realist who has not overlooked the innate romance of life—the possibility of every man becoming a hero, if only to himself. He was one of that band of Irish artists who have taken upon themselves the task of restoring the national note to Irish art. The peculiar relationship of Irish politics to those of Westminster has made the political consciousness of Ireland an acute and sensitive thing, and her national life introspective and self-conscious. But in spite of this her art had almost been allowed to die out. Ireland attempted the impossible task of restoring the uniqueness of her nationality by political means. Ignoring, and often despising, such means, the men and women of the Irish literary movement saw that the real remedy lay much deeper. And they set to work to make Ireland express her nationality through art. Many of them went and lived among the peasants and fisherfolk who still spoke Erse ; others, like Dr Douglas Hyde and Lady Gregory, rediscovered the ancient love songs and legends of Erin ; George Russell (A. E.) and W. B. Yeats brought their fine imaginations and full knowledge of philosophy and art to bear upon the psychology of the Irish people, and they linked up the mysticism of the Celt with that of the Far East ; and J. M. Synge went out into the west of the island and came back with much of its wild life crystallised and revealed in the form of drama.

The propaganda of the plays, however, is never direct. Synge does not attempt to teach, he inter-

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prets. And the uproar which followed the first stage representation of *The Playboy of the Western World*, and which has followed that play, in other forms, across the Atlantic, shows at least that his interpretation is alive. The play, however, is not only one of the most notable plays of the Irish renaissance, with a peculiar and often explosive interest for Irishmen, it is one of the master plays of the modern British revival of the drama. Like *Riders to the Sea* and *The Shadow of the Glen*, it has a simplification of stage technique and a hint of unexpressed mystery recalling Ibsen, besides that wealth of picturesque phrase already noted. His peasants talk like poets without knowing it, just as they are humorists without knowing it. And it is at this point that we come in touch with the temper of the Irish patriotism that found offence in *The Playboy of the Western World*.

The Irish have long had a reputation for humour and fine language, and we know such a reputation has been well earned, but they are as unconscious of the one as they are of the other. I do not think it will ever be quite possible for a mere Saxon to fully appreciate the real qualities of Irish humour, any more than it will be possible for them to enter into the real nature of Irish sentiment. Dion Boucicault and Tom Moore, by creating entirely fictitious types of these characteristics, have handicapped even those of us who desire to know the reality. It will take generations for the average Britisher to live

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down the tradition of *The Shaugraun* and *The Colleen Bawn* and "The Harp that once through Tara's Halls." But the Saxon may be forgiven, although his sin is great, because he has been led astray by Irishmen; indeed, the stage Irishman and the sort of patriotism you get in Tom Moore might well have been practical jokes, played by clever and humorous Irishmen as a sort of revenge on their Saxon rulers, did we not know that their fictions have more fanatical devotees in Ireland than in Great Britain or America. The stage Irishman has conquered popular imagination, and substitutes, even though they be facts, are not accepted; and when a realist like Synge comes along, and depicts the native peasant as he is, his play is denounced as unpatriotic. At the same time, the Irish have a national humour more akin to the humour of Christy Mahon than to the humour of Conn. That humour is a deep and real thing, and all the more so because unconscious. The Englishman has a sense of humour that can laugh at this unconscious humour of Ireland; but the Irishman does not laugh at it, any more than he laughs at the jokes of an Englishman. He has sufficient sense of humour to enjoy a caricature of himself, but not enough to appreciate the truth about himself.

*The Playboy of the Western World* is so rich in knowledge of character, and so delightful in comedy, that it rises superior to its own tendency towards farce in the last act. It is the story of a down-trodden and



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dejected youth who becomes a hero by accident. Christy Mahon, the playboy, tired and dirty, arrives, in the opening of the play, at a wayside shebeen. The master of the house and his cronies are about to depart for the bacchanalian festivities of a wake. The appearance of the youth excites sympathy, which becomes keen interest when he hints that he is flying from the penalties of crime. Christy has been the slave of a tyrannical father, and in a moment of passion he arose and slew the oppressor. It is against the consequences of this act that he is now a fugitive. "You should have had good reason for doing the like of that," observes the innkeeper. Christy replies, with, to the English mind, delightful unconsciousness of the humour of his words, "He was a dirty man. God forgive him, and he getting old and crusty, the way I couldn't put up with him at all." The growing interest of his audience makes an artist of Christy, and he unrolls his tale subtly with an eye to effect. He reveals a gorgeous crime, not a petty assault. The peasants are awestricken, and Pegeen, the daughter of the house, is full of romantic fervour. How did he do the deed? Various hints are dropped in the hope of drawing this information from him. Did he shoot the old man? "I never used weapons," replies the Playboy, "I've no licence, and I'm a law-fearing man." "It was with a hilted knife, maybe?" says another. Christy is scandalised. "Do you take me for a slaughter-boy?" he exclaims.

With such mystifying does the youth play his part,

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and interest in him develops, his own self-importance grows—just as it does with men who come into the possession of worldly goods. The women fall in love with him. He is the unique man, the conqueror. Pegeen deposes her sweetheart and falls at Christy's feet. But, alas! it soon transpires that he has not killed his father after all. He struck him down with a hoe, to be sure, and, imagining that he had caused his death, fled the scene of crime, terror-stricken. The old man revives and gives chase; and he arrives eventually at the shebeen, the bandages about his head mute witnesses of his son's unpremeditated violence. The truth is out, and the people taunt the Playboy, who, thus nerved by exasperation, approaches the heroic again, this time in the presence of witnesses, and once more strikes his parent. Then the mob turn against the Playboy and his own life is in danger. Even Pegeen's romantic sense of murder is overcome in face of the reality. "There's a great gap between a gallus story and a dirty deed." But the second blow is even less effective than the first, and the father, reviving unexpectedly, comes forward apparently to assert his parental authority. "Are you coming to be killed a third time?" demands Christy. But the tyrant in the father is subdued; Christy has the upper hand. And the play ends with Christy Mahon driving the old man before him—a willing slave. Pegeen, seeing the youth a hero once more, and more a hero than ever, relents, but it is too late; the Mahons have gone, and her lamentations

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over the loss of "the only Playboy of the Western World" closes the tragi-comedy.

This little incident, revealing so full a sense of the Irish temperament, is not merely significant of Ireland. It is a symbol of what goes on in the minds of most human beings. Imagination builds the man all the world over, and when it uplifts him above the rest of humanity his hour is come. He is adored and reviled. The unique person is worshipped sometimes, but he is rarely forgiven.

The plays of John M. Synge are a reaction against the problem plays of the Ibsen school and Bernard Shaw's drama of discussion. The tendency of modern drama, in spite of much wit and a little humour, has been intellectual rather than imaginative, with the result that the "advanced" theatre has become little more than a forum for the advocacy of reform and the display of dialectics. Bernard Shaw, the leader and most distinguished exponent of this drama, has admitted his ideal audience to be a pit of philosophers. And the supporters of that school of playwriting have been called, and even call themselves, "intellectuals." This very admission indicates a segregation from the main current of national life, but, as a matter of fact, the problem and dialectical drama is not national, it is the drama of a class, the expression of a fairly widespread desire for social change and a more limited, yet very assertive, curiosity about ideas, especially ideas associated with sex. Synge stands for a national, as distinct from a class,

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drama : a drama which interprets character rather than analyses it, which reveals rather than proves ; a drama of humour rather than of wit, and a drama which above all things nourishes the imagination instead of sacrificing everything to the intellect. He had perhaps an unnecessary objection to the problem play, which, ephemeral as it must be, still has its place in a live theatre, as well as its value, even though that value be purely didactic. But Synge was right in his claims for a national drama, and also in his attack upon the Ibsen influence, for there is undoubtedly a tendency, or rather an attempt, to look upon that influence, and its results, as the main current of dramatic expression. That is neither true nor desirable. The stage of the future must be varied, admitting all kinds of drama, even though some plays should approximate to the form of a dialogue of Plato. But the main dramatic current in a properly alive theatre will always be imaginative and humorous, having its roots deep down in reality, but without fear of romance. Synge is one of the first influences towards such a drama. The intellectuals call themselves realists, but they deny romance ; Synge always aims at reality and leaves romance to take care of itself. The result is that his plays are joyous expressions of life, full of laughter and imaginative light, as distinct from the serious, witty, intellectual drama of advanced culture, with its ponderous self-consciousness and its morbid love of ideas. The very richness of Synge's phraseology is significant of



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his attitude, as he himself was fully aware. Writing of the rich phrases used by the peasants of Wicklow he says : " This matter, I think, is of importance, for in countries where the imagination of the people, and the language they use, is rich and living, it is possible for a writer to be rich and copious in his words, and at the same time to give the reality, which is the root of all poetry, in a comprehensive and natural form. In the modern literature of towns, however, richness is found only in sonnets or prose poems, or in one or two elaborate books that are far away from the profound and common interests of life." His plays do actually reveal to us the profundity of these common interests, and because of that alone they are alive with a deeper vitality than any play with a purely special aim and outlook. He, however, lays too much stress on the lasting qualities of drama : immortality is not essential to art. Every age should create its own art, for that is the only proof that it is alive ; whether the art of any particular age or person will be immortal must be left to chance. But there is abundance of proof that art founded, like the plays of John M. Synge, in " the rich joy found only in what is superb and wild in reality " has more chance of immortality than any art born of what is cultured and tame.

## MAX BEERBOHM

**M**AX BEERBOHM gives you the impression that he was born grown-up—that is to say, more or less ripe, when others would be more or less raw and green. “At school I read ‘Marius the Epicurean’ in bed,” he tells us, and he found that book as fascinating as “Midshipman Easy.” Maturity having established itself thus early, it is not surprising to find Max Beerbohm issuing his complete works—seven essays, with a bibliography by Mr John Lane—in a slender green volume, when he was but twenty-four years of age—by the almanack. “Once, in the delusion that Art,” he wrote, in 1895, “loving the recluse, would make his life happy, I wrote a little for a yellow quarterly and had that *succès de fiasco* which is always given to a young writer of talent. But the stress of creation soon overwhelmed me. Only Art with a capital H gives any consolations to her henchman. And I, who crave no knighthood, shall write no more. I shall write no more. Already I feel myself to be a trifle outmoded. I belong to the Beardsley period. Younger men, with months of activity before them, with fresher schemes and notions, with newer enthusiasm, have pressed forward since then. *Cedo junioribus*. Indeed,



MAX BEERBOHM

BY

LOVAT FRASER





## MAX BEERBOHM

I stand aside with no regret. For to be outmoded is to be a classic, if one has written well. I have acceded to the hierarchy of good scribes and rather like my niche." But although Max in his maturity is not old, he is, properly speaking, a kind of ripe youth ; he seems to be immune from the trespassing years, having, doubtless, forestalled them. Being elderly by nature he does not grow old ; he is as one of the Olympians. And having concluded his life as a writer in 1896 by the publication of "The Works of Max Beerbohm," he has made it possible to continue that life in the most modern of all ways—by a succession of anti-climaxes. Thus, after "The Works" came his fantastic tale, "The Happy Hypocrite," and in 1899 a new volume of essays, whose title, "More," was complementary both in name and substance to the first. Ten years later came another anti-climax of essays, entitled, with renewed reference to the resurrectionary life of Max, "Yet Again." This line of *belles lettres*, however, has been headed off, as it were, by the appearance of "Zuleika Dobson : An Oxford Love Story," in which Max Beerbohm appears as novelist. Besides these books, Mr Beerbohm, as "Max," has shown us his contemporaries for what they are in the medium of caricature, and, far from being a used-up energy, even after his earliest retirement, and in spite of these books, he not only renounced the cosiness he had claimed as his inheritance in 1895, but succeeded Bernard Shaw as dramatic critic of *The Saturday Review* in May 1898.

## ALL MANNER OF FOLK

"The younger generation is knocking at the door," wrote G. B. S. in his famous "Valedictory" to that journal, missing the point, for how much younger was he than his successor! "The younger generation is knocking at the door; and as I open it there steps spritely in the incomparable Max."

But Max Beerbohm was not even the younger generation knocking at the door of dramatic criticism. Bernard Shaw was that younger generation: the incomparable Max was a reaction, but incomparable all the same. His penetrating and creative criticism of the modern stage did not always side with the modern view of drama, but it was always a distinct view, independent, original and illuminating—in fine, incomparable.

Reviewers are in the habit of speaking of his astounding cleverness and of his brilliance, but that is their lame and often grudging way of admitting that he is incomparable. Cleverness and brilliance are the tricks of the literary huckster, and to see only these characteristics in Max is to see him not at all. Max Beerbohm is first and foremost a personality; a point of view. And, secondly, he is by no means an unique phenomenon in a civilised society. He is as old as Horace and as new as Charles Lamb; he is the spirit of urbanity; he is town. He is civilisation conserving itself and laughing at itself. "A delicate and Tory temperament precludes me from conversation with Radicals," he says. That does not pre-

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clude him from laughing at institutions, and what might be called institutional persons. But it precludes him from shouting and arguing loudly. He talks the quiet talk of the cultured in those finely balanced subtle essays of his, and when he reproves in pictures he reproves with a smile. His laughter is always Meredith's "laughter of the mind." He is an urbane controversialist discussing life apropos of himself. This egotism delights us because Max is delightful. He himself would not deny the charge of *poseur*, but his pose is as natural as anything really civilised can be natural. Civilisation is the art of the human race : Max Beerbohm is a detail of that art, just as the column is a detail of architecture, or rhyme of lyric verse. He is the finishing touch, the ornament, one of the points at which Nature becomes self-conscious, contemplative, artistic, and meet for Berkeley Square or Jermyn Street. He is, in short, a dandy. You would gather that from his essays ; from the careful and inimitable elegance of his prose, and from the deliberate way it is jewelled with exotic words. You would deduce a dandy from such essays, but not a D'Orsay, although Max is also an amateur in portraiture. D'Orsay abandoned himself to personal display ; his gorgeous clothes were flamboyant weeds. Max is never abandoned, and you would never deduce such a dandy from his essays. What you would deduce would be a person more dignified, less theatrical, but none the less proud of himself ; and the quiet eccentricity of his clothes

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would serve as a suitable background for the sly brilliance of his wit. For the dandyism of Max is intrinsic ; it is a state of being rather than an assumption ; it is psychologic, expressing itself in wit rather than clothes ; and wit is the dandyism of the mind.

. . . . .

It does not matter what he writes about. He belongs to the essayists ; his subjects interest because he is interesting. A good essayist justifies any subject, and Max Beerbohm as an essayist is next in succession to Charles Lamb. His essays, and these are his greatest works, are genial invitations to discuss Max, and you discuss him all the more readily and with fuller relish because they are not too explicit—indeed, he is often quite prim. “ On the banner that I wave is embroidered a device of prunes and prisms,” he says. The author of “ The Works of Max Beerbohm,” of “ More,” and of “ Yet Again ” does not tell you all ; he pays you a delicate compliment by leaving you something to tell yourself ; the end by his ellipsis, as in all the great essayists, is yourself. He is quite frank with you, and properly genial, but he is too fastidious to rush into friendship with his readers. They must deserve friendship first. He does not gush. In his earlier work he recalled the Wise Youth in “ Richard Feverel,” and Whistler of the “ Ten o’Clock.” But latterly he has grown more confiding and less artificial. His whimsies have given place to irony—an irony with the flavour of a fully matured wine. But he has not, as yet, achieved



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great distinction in letters outside the medium in which he has proved himself a master. His departures from the essay, in the form of a short story and a novel, are, in a sense, extensions of his genius as an essayist. "The Happy Hypocrite" is really an essay masquerading as a story, and "Zuleika Dobson," a wreath of essays (including one exquisite gem on Oxford), aphorisms and detached reflections, hung about a delightfully extravagant story. The real Max Beerbohm is, I fancy, an essayist pure and simple, the essay being the inevitable medium for the expression of his urbane and civilised genius. There are, he has told us, a few people in England who are interested in repose as an art. He is, undoubtedly, one of them. But he is also interested in the art of the essay, and his essays are exquisite contributions to that rare art. In them you see revealed the complete Max interpreting deftly, by means of wit and humour, imagination and scholarship, that "uninterrupted view of my fellow-creatures," to use his own words, which he admits preferable to books, and which, doubtless, he prefers better than any other view in life.

## ON A CERTAIN ARRANGEMENT IN GREY AND BLACK

**I**T was Whistler's desire that the public should look upon the picture of his mother as "An Arrangement in Grey and Black." But for many years the public hardly looked at the picture at all, save to wonder stupidly and to laugh, for it is no easy thing to change the taste of a generation, especially if that change involve a deeper vision of a familiar thing. Strange is it, however, that the mother-picture did not make an immediate appeal, for before all its subtleties of line and colour, before all those audacities of technique and composition, which Whistler, the craft-proud painter, delighted in springing upon the world of pictures, it reveals transcendent that simple, sacred thing: the beauty and mystery of motherhood. Perhaps the picture was not shown to the right sort of people. It was shown only to artists and the weary habitués of art galleries.

It that be so, it would not be fair to lay the entire blame of its early neglect at the door of the public. The experts rejected it, after the manner of experts face to face with something strange and strong. Artists and critics all, save a very few, saw no virtue in it. The authorities at the Royal Academy at first

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refused it wall space at their exhibition in 1872. Only one member of the Academy, Sir William Boxall, pleaded for its admission, and it was eventually hung to prevent the scandal of his resignation. The connoisseurs, as usual, did not know their own stupid business: a Strand art dealer priced it at one hundred pounds; it was exhibited in America and catalogued at twelve hundred dollars in 1884; it was hung at the Salon and received its first honour—a third-class medal. But France made amends by acquiring the masterpiece for the national collection in 1891, and by making Whistler an officer of the Legion of Honour, and the picture found a home on the walls of the Musée de Luxembourg. Fourteen years afterwards, by special decree of President Loubet, Whistler's portrait of his mother returned to England for a brief space to take its rightful place among the master's other great portraits at the Memorial Exhibition of his works arranged by the International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers, of which he was the first President, at the New Gallery.

Painters will always value the portrait as an arrangement in grey and black, and it was because Whistler was a painter that he wished the public to appreciate it in the same way. But he painted better than he understood the average man. Indeed, the average man was nothing to him. Whistler did not realise that in making this epic portrait of a mother, even though that mother was the mother who bore

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him, in limning with infinite art and love this particular arrangement in grey and black, he was trespassing upon common property. I say trespassing deliberately, for he wished to make private that mother-love which is common to all. Certainly it is true that those who look at the portrait have no invitation to pry into the artist's family affairs ; but there is small need—for in painting his own love for his own mother, Whistler has interpreted whatever of reverence an old and beloved mother has inspired in any man.

Obviously, then, the portrait being what it is, he could not help telling us something of his own filial affection ; but knowing his singularly self-centred character as a painter, and his love of paint as such, one does not wonder that he failed to realise that his portrait admitted the public into the sanctuary. Still less is one surprised that such a man as Whistler might fail to see that by a masterly expression of his own maternal veneration he was symbolising the mother-worship of all. He has, in short, admitting the world, at one and the same time, into his secret and into its own. We know now that Whistler did not see his mother only as an arrangement in grey and black, fitting though grey and black be for the closing years of a mother's reign ; we know now that the arresting intensity of this picture, with its quiet nobleness, was Whistler's psalm to his mother. Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, in their "Life of James MacNeill Whistler," have given us reverent



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glimpses of the relationship between mother and son. We can now picture the trim but kindly Puritan lady brooding over the young lives of her sons in America, in Russia and in England ; encouraging Jemmie in his drawing, caring for his unstable health, half-willingly reproving his whims. Jemmie was excitable and delicate, therefore he came under her more intimate care. " I prefer this gentlest of my boys to go with me," she wrote in her diary.

Little glimpses have we also in this diary of the Whistler yet to be, of Whistler the critic and Whistler the scoffer. Once the boys were taken through the Czar's palace at Peterhof, and they were shown some pictures by Peter the Great. " There are some fine pictures," writes the mother in her diary, " but Peter's own paintings of the feathered race ought to be most highly prized, though our Jemmie was so saucy as to laugh at them." Did she realise then that " our Jemmie," gentlest of her boys, would live to compile " The Gentle Art of Making Enemies " ? But, best of all, we now know that Whistler the *poseur*, that Whistler of the white lock, the dandy—yes, if you will, the coxcomb—was not the whole Whistler, not, indeed, the real Whistler. The portrait tells us that plainly enough ; Whistler's portrait of his mother is also a portrait of Whistler. It is a revelation of the boy become man, the boy who, on his tenth birthday, slipped a poem under his mother's plate for a surprise at breakfast. " I shall copy it," she wrote, " that he may be reminded of his happy

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childhood when perhaps his grateful mother is not with him."

Throughout the whole of his life Whistler showed deep reverence for his mother. He corresponded with her regularly when they were apart, and, when she left Chelsea, where the portrait was painted, for Hastings, where she lived until her death, she was in constant touch with her famous son. He visited her as often as he could, and she followed his sparkling career with deep, if perhaps bewildered, interest. For it must not be forgotten that she was a Puritan, and that she had all the reservations of the quietist temperament. The life of an artist was not the sort of life she would have chosen for her son, even though she encouraged and admired his gift for drawing when he was a boy, and it may easily be imagined how she marvelled at the pranks of Whistler the Butterfly with a sting in its tail. But none knew so well as she did that that Whistler was created specially for the outside world. The real Whistler never appeared before the public ; the rich inner life of the man who could create the "Arrangement in Grey and Black," the "Carlyle," and the nocturnes, etchings and lithographs, was reserved for the few intimate friends, chief of whom was his mother. Whistler's portrait of his mother is a high comment upon that great friendship.

It is difficult to imagine how any man could fail to see the beauty and the significance of Whistler's portrait of his mother. Indeed there must be very

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few nowadays who cannot appreciate this masterpiece at its full worth. The thousands of tourists who troop past the original in the Luxembourg Gallery testify to its popularity among a vast and varied number of people who for two decades have ranked it with the Venus de Milo, Notre Dame and La Sainte Chapelle, and the other popular art treasures of Paris. Yet for a picture to become a "sight" is no sign of the deeper appreciation of art. With the mother, however, it is different; its popularity is due to a finer feeling than idle curiosity. Those who stand before this picture become part of a symphony of feeling which embraces the whole world. They feel instinctively that they are in the presence of a sacred thing, not only motherhood, holy and sacred as that is—for every true mother is a Madonna—but of aged motherhood, of the last phase—the twilight of motherhood, with all its tragic sense of lonely accomplishment. Life itself is tragic and ironic, but the tragedy of life finds its supreme expression in the twilight of motherhood, at that hour when the mother-mind recalls the past and the present—her children, their arrival, their need for her through long, long years, and then, needing her no longer, their departure. In this last lies the irony of motherhood, for a mother never realises that her children are no longer children.

I see all this and much more in Whistler's picture. But, it may be urged, Whistler did not mean that I should see these things; he resented the obtrusion

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of ideas in painting. I cannot say what Whistler's intention was ; perhaps even he did not know. As an artist he was intent upon his arrangement in grey and black ; but we know also that as a man and a son he was painting his mother. It was not often that he would acknowledge the sentiment of his work, but once he did admit to a friend that "one does like to make one's mummy just as nice as possible." It was this human side of the picture which made Carlyle agree to sit to Whistler, and we may be sure that the mystic dignity of that little womanly figure, with its serene yet wistful eyes, its beautiful, resigned hands resting amid a little crushed old lace, took back the aged philosopher's mind to remote days in far-away Ecclefechan, just as it may recall everyone to the eternal need and the eternal rejection of the mother.



## EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE works of Edgar Allan Poe are the least American of all the outstanding literary work of the United States. Although born in America, of American parents, Poe was a spiritual foreigner in that land, and he never became naturalised. And even to-day, long after his genius has been gathered into the treasury of American achievement, you wonder what it is doing in a land whose tradition is still in the making ; whose oldest tradition, in the words of a more recent poet, is her youth. His work looks as strange in its literary surroundings as a Tudor fireplace would look in a New York hotel. I sometimes fancy that America collected Edgar Poe as Americans love to collect antiquities from the Old World ; he is her first old master. But in the early years of the nineteenth century he was not a very highly valued old master, although he probably had more appreciators in America than Shelley, our own exotic poet, had during the same years in England. America, above all places, and at the very dawn of an independence which was beginning to express itself in an energy that has since created a new type of civilisation, had no use—to use one of her own expressive phrases—for an

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exotic poet ; no use for a wayward and wilful genius ; her thoughts were elsewhere. So Poe had perforce to rough it. He warped his passionate nature against her indifferent activities, trying first his way then her way of winning, and failing, as men recognise failure, in each, he died young—broken and embittered, for he fought ambitiously, not for the fight, but to win.

But it is not enough to say that he is not American in the distinct and emphatic sense in which Walt Whitman and Mark Twain are American ; he is not even American in the partial sense in which Emerson and Thoreau are. He is so much a child of an older ordering of life, so imbued with the storied feudalism of Europe, with the splendour of her heraldry and the pageantry of her ancient ways, that his place in American letters must always have the incongruity of some accident of destiny.

At the same time it is as doubtful whether even older nations would have had a place for so rare a growth as it is certain that Edgar Allan Poe would only have been sure of his affinities in places not entirely devoid of tradition, and, as, indeed, his peculiar genius, vibrating round the world, did actually find its first real affinity in the fraternal enthusiasm of Charles Baudelaire.

In Poe's work there is a gloomy forecast of an era in art which was not destined to reach its meridian until some half-a-century later. He was the earliest of the English-speaking decadents—the first-fruit

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of that "mortal ripening" which in nature consummates the growth and heralds the rebirth of things, and in art indicates the rebirth of the spirit. If he pilfered the ideas of his contemporaries, as was often charged against him, he returned the compliment a hundredfold in plagiarising by anticipation the art movements of his immediate future. He was Swinburnian when the author of "Poems and Ballads" was a baby; he was a symbolist when "L'après-midi d'un Faune" and *Pelleas et Melisande* were known only to the Fates. He even entered more familiar realms by a remarkable series of tales anticipating the detective heroics of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the scientific romances of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells.

But not one of these things approached finality in Edgar Poe. He was a meeting-place of tendencies: of ideas ripe for participation in the activities of literature; of ideas in waiting; ideas urgent for expression, which did not achieve full artistic vitality until the days of Rossetti and the pre-Raphaelites; Mallarmé and the Symbolists; Zola, and the Realists, all of whom found final terms for many of the thoughts and emotions which strove for utterance through his melancholy genius. Perhaps the unfulfilled desire of expression, for Poe's ideas and feelings were born before their medium had been invented, contributed to that brooding gloom which pervades even his humour. Maybe it was not alone the constant battle for material adequacy, nor yet

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the early loss of a young wife, that clouded his moods ; but rather did that habit of melancholy become fixed because of the meeting in his temperament of tendencies born too soon to be uttered ; because of his glimpse, his half-vision of an era then dawning, which W. B. Yeats years later called the "autumn of the flesh." It was the inevitable pathos of one who had wandered too far from the common mood, rather than the expression of failure, either material or moral, and both his intermittent dipsomania and his habitual bitterness were probably born of the same cause.

Poe himself was unconscious of any such construction of the genesis of his sense of gloom. In fact he went out of his way to theorise about melancholy, treating it as an expression of the highest beauty. He proved by irresistible logic, of which like many poets he was a master, that his poem, "The Raven," was constructed on a rational and reasonable thesis, like a proposition in mathematics, whilst at the same time he was being charged with having plagiarised the poem by adapting and perfecting some contemporaneous and anonymous verses of similar form and motive, which last would have been a far greater feat of genius than merely building verses out of problems. As an adapter, breathing the fire of genius into the form of incompetence, Edgar Allan Poe must take his stand beside Shakespeare and Burns, who were both masters of this kind of plagiarism.

He was the first poet to traffic in Gloom and its



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handmaidens Horror and Fear, for their own sakes ; but, at the same time, he possessed one of the most versatile outlooks upon life and ideas that has ever fallen to the lot of man of letters. In addition to his achievement as poet, critic and storyteller, he was a metaphysician of originality and some daring, and a mathematician of considerable ability, this last expressing itself, strangely enough, in the delight he took in his skill as a reader of the most uncompromising cryptograms ; and, like Father O'Flynn, he had even made excursions into the realms of conchology ! But strangest of all his gifts, to those readers who only know him by his tales of imagination and horror, he also possessed a vivid sense of humour and remarkable skill as a humorous writer ; but this, on reflection, and considering the close relationship between laughter and tears, ought not to be surprising.

But Poe, above all things and for all time, is a poet—even in his prose. He knew this so well that in the preface to “Eureka,” that still-born metaphysical treatise on which he set so much store, he wished to be judged as a poet alone. He was the earliest English writer to use the term prose-poetry for that high-wrought and passionate prose which is one of the characteristics of latter-day literature. Like Charles Baudelaire, with whom he had so many dreams in common, he dreamt during certain intense moments “of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme, subtle

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and staccato enough to follow the lyric motions of the soul, the wavering outlines of meditation, the sudden starts of the conscience." His prose at its best has the effect of a carefully woven fabric of many colours and strange device; it is ornate and decorative, like the prose of Walter Pater, though lacking the fine reticences and that laboured compactness of thought and sequential ordering of ideas which drape with beauty the stately prose of "The Renaissance" and the "Imaginary Portraits." His tendency was to overload his sentences with a chaos of all the ideas associated with his theme. Even in his stories he was like the older school of essayists who delighted in displaying abnormal power of memory and wide reading. This was not unnatural, for he had pondered, like the "unhappy master" in "The Raven," over "many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore"; indeed he was essentially introspective and bookish, his experiences were drawn from the riches of his own inner life, supported by facts from the only other life known to him—the world of books.

All of which had the effect of making his essays and tales attractive to bookish and literary people who might otherwise have shrunk from their themes, and it accounts largely for the considerable influence his work has had upon succeeding generations of writers. His woven words glow with the subdued but intense colour and intricate but distinct pattern of a Persian rug, but a rug so rare and unsuited for

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the common ordinances of utility as to find a resting-place on the wall rather than the floor. His work, at its best, produces some such effect on the mind ; it is spectacular, even where he would have had it useful. It is decorative, producing the subtle interest of art work which is individual, strange and remote.

The relationship between joy and sorrow, though strained, is nevertheless intimate. Most humorists are capable of wringing tears out of their readers as well as laughter—many have been men of sorrow. The humour of both Shakespeare and Dickens always dovetailed laughter and tears, and more than one modern humorous writer is a master of the gruesome, as readers of the tales of Mr W. W. Jacobs are aware.

But Edgar Allan Poe wrote humorous sketches by the way ; they were the incidentals of a temperament whose natural product was melancholy. He breathed most freely in an atmosphere of gloom. His mind was a panorama of bizarre desolation and painted shadow. He walked through the valley of the shadow as a holiday-maker would ramble through some romantically beautiful glen. At the same time, his melancholy was not the plaintive melancholy of a Mrs Gummidge ; it was not, in the words of the music-hall ditty, " misery for him to be happy " ; he was actually happy in a shadowland of sadness and woe. He did not desire, as Keats did, wistfully to

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“ Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
What though among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret,  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre thin, and dies ;  
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs ;  
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new love pine at them beyond to-morrow.”

He courted the weariness, the fever, and the fret and was quite at home where men sit and hear each other groan. Rather did Poe sing, looking upon the strange, inexplicable thing we call life, as though he were a spectator in a theatre :

“ Out—out are the lights—out all !  
And, over each quivering form,  
The curtain, a funeral pall,  
Comes down with the rush of a storm,  
And the angels all pallid and wan,  
Uprising, unveiling, affirm  
That the play is the tragedy ‘ Man,’  
And its hero the Conqueror Worm.”

And he watched this eternal tragedy with its constantly recurring *dénouement*, recording in his tales and poems his impressions of the play. He does not express any desire to have it otherwise ; his temperament needed such a setting. Poe is the gloom of things.

He would treasure for future use words and incidents of melancholy sound or association, and much



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of the characteristic effect of his best tales and poems is due to the deliberate keying down of the atmosphere he desires to create, by the use of properly suggestive words ; and where he has not such words ready to his pen, as in the case of favourites like sable, dank, black, night, gloom, tarn, he stimulates the sense of melancholy or sorrow by inventing curiously haunting proper names like Auber, Usher and Ulalume. The poem called by the last name is largely a play upon certain words with the object of creating Poe's favourite mood of sorrow, in modern musical phraseology it might be called a tone-poem—a tone-poem in the key of gloom :

“ Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,  
And tempted her out of her gloom—  
And conquered her scruples and gloom ;  
And we passed to the end of the vista,  
But were stopped by the door of a tomb—  
By the door of a legended tomb ;  
And I said—‘ What is written, sweet sister,  
On the door of this legended tomb ? ’  
She replied—‘ Ulalume—Ulalume—  
’Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume ! ’ ”

Death accompanies the imagination of Edgar Allan Poe on every possible occasion ; it is the theme of three-quarters of his best prose work and nearly all of his poems. For him sadness is the essence of beauty, and “ melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.” He put this principle of his, and its dictum that “ the death of a beautiful woman

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is the most poetical topic in the world," into practice with a logical persistency amounting to obsession. But, withal the beauty of his expression, this perpetual concern for death in its frailest aspect is too limited for the big poetic note ; it is narrow and precious, saving itself by exquisiteness rather than greatness of emotion. It is, in fact, a little insane, like all obsessions. But even the quality of Poe's worship of death is in the minor key. Death for him was no "dark mother always gliding near with soft feet" ; his love of death was the sort of love given to a mistress rather than to a mother. He could never have sung of death with such a note of healthy resignation as Whitman sounded :

" From me to thee glad serenades,  
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and  
  feastings for thee,  
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread  
  sky are fitting,  
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night,  
The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose  
  voice I know,  
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd death,  
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee."

Poe embraced a coffin, not death ; his sense of death is heavy with mortality ; decay and the clammy power of the Conqueror Worm are always evident in his tragedy. Death is always the intruder, the divider, the destroyer, and the heart of Poe's interest is that subtle "anguish of the soul" which glides

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in the wake of the intruder. Poe luxuriates in this anguish, like a child enjoying its own sobs, and in one poem, and that one of his greatest lyrics, and, consequently, one of the world's greatest lyrics, he places himself in the attitude of death and, looking back at life, in the form of his beloved, he reposes in her something of the faith and content Whitman has in his "dark mother":

"My tantalised spirit  
Here blandly reposes,  
Forgetting, or never  
Regretting its roses—  
Its old agitations  
Of myrtles and roses:  
For now, while so quietly  
Lying, it fancies  
A holier odour  
About it, of pansies—  
A rosemary odour,  
Commingled with pansies—  
With rue and the beautiful  
Puritan pansies."

The weakness and strength of Edgar Allan Poe was the ready brilliance of a mind which gave him extraordinary versatility in the art of letters and in intellectual interests. Poet, storyteller, essayist, critic, metaphysician, artist, his fine intellect ranged over many fields, and often, greatly daring in proper arrogance, it ranged over fields in which it was obviously a trespasser upon the rightful domain of others. That versatility destroys the balance of his

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work as a whole, but nothing can effect the greatness of his best achievements. The quickness of his mind ought to have given him greater scope as a journalist, in the sense that Daniel Defoe was a journalist ; but Poe lacked that sense of publicity which Defoe possessed so pre-eminently. In other respects his mind recalls the author of " Robinson Crusoe." Both were born controversialists, Poe on metaphysics and art, Defoe on politics and social affairs, and both loved the adventurous and the gruesome in romance, one writing " King Pest " and the other the " Journal of the Plague." Where Poe was a poet, Defoe was a novelist, and if Poe never wrote anything so universal in its appeal as " Robinson Crusoe," he did write " The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym," which reveal to us adventures in the ends of the earth quite as enthralling as any that have been written. Defoe's strength lay in his intimate relationship with actuality. He was a man of affairs, concerned with the common life of his day, whereas Poe was a man of books and ideas. Defoe's romance was real ; Poe's romance was imaginative. It is the difference between applied and fine art. The work of the former may be compared with architecture, the latter's with jewellery. Defoe painted frescoes. Poe, easel pictures. And for that reason Edgar Allan Poe must always remain a master, but a master in the minor key.



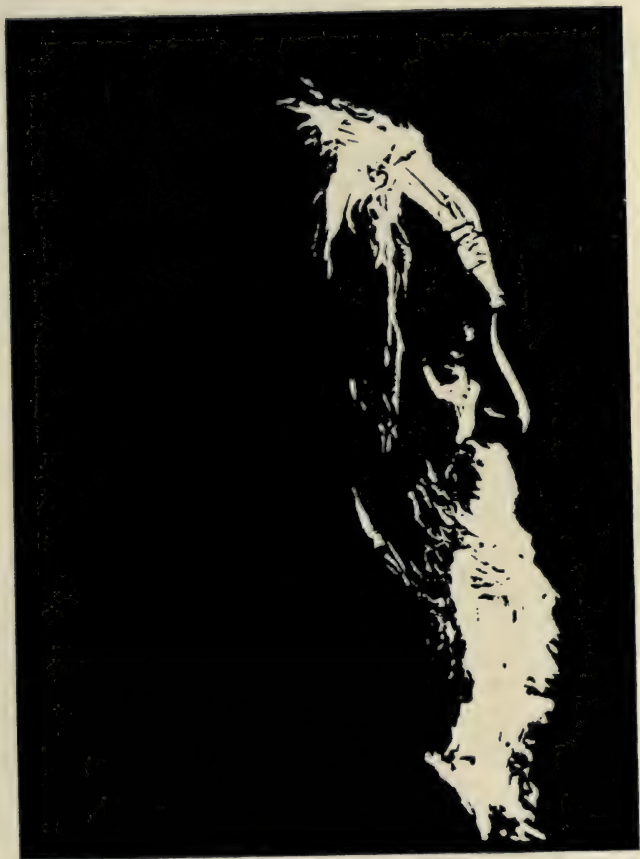
## WALT WHITMAN

**I**F I were asked to name the most national product of American thought, something more national than the Declaration of Independence, more characteristic than Abraham Lincoln, more individual than Emerson and more western than Mark Twain, I should name Walt Whitman. Of all American writings his are the most native; other American writers are American because, having been born in America, they write about American things when they might, with slight reservations, have produced much the same work in any other country; but Walt Whitman is not a writer who uses America as his theme as he might use any other country; he is American in attitude and idea, he is the inner vision of the United States striving for expression. And if his voice is, as yet, a voice crying in the wilderness, if as yet it is only half comprehended by many of his fellow-countrymen, it is none the less American for that—it could never have happened elsewhere. But Whitman is more than a mere literary phenomenon; he is a symbol and a prophecy. His personality combines all that is momentous and enduring in a complex and cosmopolitan community. By his life no less than by his work, he is the interpreter and

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expositor of the consciousness of his land and race. There is something prophetic even in his self-confidence. He knows there is no hurry ; he knows the showy and shallow things so often called American will pass, and that the vanity of dollars will pass, so he chants here and now, singing into a future which is no mystery, but as deep a certainty as the past or the present.

Obvious as all this may be to many modern minds, it is by no means the accepted idea of Whitman, even in his own country. And there is undoubtedly a danger, now that his poetic genius is admitted, in the possibility of his works receiving the fatal unread acceptance of the classics, before the immediate generations have absorbed their meaning. For this is an age of easy canonisations ; we are too hurried and anxious for pondering overmuch upon ideas and visions that are not instantly marketable ; and Whitman, although fit for human nature's daily food, is not for the cursory day. He is elusive, sometimes even tiresome ; and his thought is a constant, and often disconcerting, challenge. He utters the "password Primeval," and it is a word that will carry you far ; but no glib pronouncement of it will avail. The password must be informed, perhaps, inspired ; at any rate it must spring from an attitude which is felt and owned before being uttered. That is why those who approach "Leaves of Grass" are either attracted or repulsed, but rarely indifferent.



WALT WHITMAN

BY

GORDON CRAIG





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Whitman must be accepted or rejected ; half measures and compromises destroy his value. To accept him as a poet and reject him as a thinker, or to accept him as a thinker and reject him as a poet, is like eating the yolk of an egg and refusing the white, or eating the white and refusing the yolk. You must take him as he is, for better or for worse. No other poet makes so complete a demand, because no other poet has put into his work so much of himself. Other poetry springs from selected moods ; Whitman's, from every mood. " Who touches this book, touches a man," he said of " Leaves of Grass." But the organic quality of Whitman's poetry has other causes, for although most volumes of poetry are collections of detached or detachable poems on circumstances, events or persons, coloured by temperament, emotion, imagination, under the influence of certain moods, his are as nearly as possible the reverse of this ; they are the interpretation and record, in the first instance, not of a distinct and peculiar personality, distinct and peculiar as Whitman's personality was in many ways, but of a personality that claims to be the average of all personalities. Whitman never desired to be unique ; he expressed emotions which he believed to be common to all human beings. The " divine average " voice thus heard in " Leaves of Grass," although taking the form of a series of chants and rhapsodies, is continuous and inseparable, for once Whitman had started his book he did not cease but kept in close communion

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with it for the rest of his life, adding to it, altering, deleting, almost from day to day. "Leaves of Grass" is in reality a diary; the diary of a temperament. Walt Whitman himself was under no illusions about his mission. He looked upon himself as the epitome of American life and his book as "the song of a great composite *democratic individual*, male or female." He deliberately adopted the prophetic attitude; impelled to it by a passionate faith in the genius of his nation. Such exuberant patriotism has never before existed, except perhaps in France during the great days of the Revolution; certainly it has never before received such vivid expression. His aim as a patriot was, in his own words: "To help put the United States (even if only in imagination) hand in hand, in one unbroken circle in a chant—to rouse them to the unprecedented grandeur of the part they are to play, and are even now playing—to the thought of their great future, and the attitude conform'd to it—especially their great esthetic, moral, scientific future (of which their vulgar material political present is but as the preparatory tuning of instruments by an orchestra), these, as hitherto, are still, for me, among my hopes, ambitions." There would seem to be nothing of a very revolutionary nature in such an ideal, but underlying its apparently platitudinous surface is the fresh vigour of a sincere, and consequently original, point of view. Whitman's patriotism is no narrow and fanatical love of his own country, it is the expression of a world-dream, in which America,

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being a new nation sprung from the seed of all the elder lands, might well lead. "For the New World, indeed," he says, "after two grand stages of preparation-strata, I perceive that now a third stage, being ready for (and without which the other two were useless), with unmistakeable signs appears. The First stage was the planning and putting on record the political foundation rights of immense masses of people—indeed all people—in the organisation of republican National, State, and municipal governments, all constructed with reference to each, and each to all. This is the American programme, not for classes, but for universal man, and is embodied in the compacts of the Declaration of Independence, and, as it began and has now grown, with its amendments, the Federal Constitution—and in the State governments, with all their interiors, and with general suffrage ; those having the sense not only of what is in themselves, but that their certain several things started, planted, hundreds of others in the same direction duly arise and follow. The Second stage relates to material prosperity, wealth, produce, labour-saving machines, iron, cotton, local, State and continental railways, intercommunication and trade with all lands, steamships, mining, general employment, organisation of great cities, cheap appliances for comfort, numberless technical schools, books, newspapers, a currency for money circulation, etc. The Third stage, rising out of the previous ones, to make them and all illustrious, I, now, for one,

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promulge, announcing a native expression—spirit, getting into form, adult, and through mentality, for these States, self-contain'd, different from others, more expansive, more rich and free, to be evidenced by original authors and poets to come, by American personalities, plenty of them, male and female, traversing the States, none excepted—and by native superb tableaux, and growths of language, songs, operas, orations, lectures, architecture—and by a sublime and serious Religious Democracy sternly taking command, dissolving the old, sloughing off surfaces, and from its own interior and vital principles, reconstructing, democratising society.” Behind this large and imaginative national ideal, Whitman visualised mystical, but very real, forces which might well create a great people. Up to his time no one had thought seriously of doing more than grafting European culture upon America, he demanded that America should develop a culture of her own ; and in doing so, he made a new nation possible. Columbus discovered America, but Walt Whitman discovered the American nation.

He discovered his nation, not entirely by indicating its characteristics and possibilities, but by becoming those characteristics and reaching out to those possibilities in his life and his art. He strove always to practise what he had imagined, to live his dream, and whoever does that strikes an inevitable and irresistible note in life, attains originality which, at its best, is becoming what all may become—sincere,



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courageous and strong. We can read of the effect of this practical imagination in the records of his superb and serene life and personality ; we can see it in his poems. "Leaves of Grass," in its abandonment of all accepted standards of verse, is not the result of pose, it is no freak of literature, but clearly and frankly in key with his attitude towards all standards and conventions, whether of art, religion or social affairs. He strove deliberately to fashion his poems as freely as he lived, and as he would have all men live. They had to be different from all their poetic predecessors, because he was different from his poetic predecessors ; but, unlike those poetic predecessors, he was not to be sharply differentiated from the common people. By becoming the poet of democracy, Whitman harked back to the days of the folk singers and bards who mixed freely with the people in equality rather than superiority. He denied the value of intensive beauty, exquisiteness, polish and the flawlessness of the fine arts. "All beauty," he said, "comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain." Those men and women who enjoy natural, robust, open-air lives, are the essential perceivers of beauty. "The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty." And, again he says, linking up theory with human conduct, in the famous

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“ Preface ” to the 1855 edition of “ Leaves of Grass,” which is at one and the same time the most profound, the most eloquent and the most useful essay on poetry in the English language : “ If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or a woman, it is enough—the fact will prevail through the universe ; but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do ; Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labour to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence towards the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men—go freely with powerful uneducated persons, and with the young, and with the mothers of families—re-examine all you have been told in school or church or in any book, and dismiss whatever insults your own soul ; and your very flesh shall be a great poem, and have the richest fluency, not only in its words, but in the silent lines of its lips and face, and between the lashes of your eyes, and in every motion and joint of your body. The poet shall not spend his time in un-needed work. He shall know that the ground is already plough’d and manured ; others may not know it, but he shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches—and shall master all attachment.”

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The great poet of the future will neither be classic nor romantic, materialist nor spiritualist. He will have nothing to do with the rhymes and metres, the pretty allusions to mythological gods and goddesses, which have for so long been so great a part of the media of the poets of Europe. All these have the taint of caste and convention, social distinctions, monasticism, and ecclesiasticism of which Whitman is the direct antithesis. Therefore, he makes his songs akin to the rugged life of America, nearer to earth, nearer to the quickness of things than that of Europe ever can be. He "sounds his barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world" in apparently careless and rough lines, but often rising to heights of impassioned rhythmic beauty unsurpassed in any English verse. At the same time it must be noted that by inventing his irregular rhapsodies, Whitman has done little more, so far as form or the lack of it goes, than to re-create and give modern significance to the method adopted by ancient prophet and poet. This is fitting in a bard who recalls to a simpler and more rugged order of life, "a world primal again." His poems bear further resemblances to the ancient bards in that they have a similar easy frankness and freedom from restraint. His songs are akin to nature, chanties of the sea and the sky, the rolling hills and far-reaching plains; and the candour and coarseness of natural things is in them as well as the reticence and the delicacy.

The attitude of Walt Whitman, then, is that of a

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healthy, proud, self-conscious American citizen, free of all European traditions, and though recognising the inevitability and true place of what has been in the past, and valuing his Old World descent from Dutch and Quaker English stock, never for a moment bending the knee to practice or precedent :

“ I have taken off my hat to nothing known or unknown,  
I am for those that have never been mastered.”

He accepts all without reserve ; strong and weak, good and evil ; seeing himself in all, in man as well as woman, in all races and conditions, and seeing all in himself. And what he demands for himself he demands for everyone. “ By God ! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms,” he says in his vehement way. He is arrogant and confident ; certain that he is right, admitting no poem into his book until it has been tested by the sun and the hills and the sea, and found true to them. At the same time he is under no illusion about the kind of work he is doing : he sees no finality in his poems ; they are but hints, indications for the greater poets to come. More than any disciple or critic, he knew the meaning and value of his work, even if he did not concern himself with its literary faults. The certainty with which he realised the essential balance and unity of his poems is equalled only by, and, doubtless, at one with, his rapt certainty of faith in the unity of every part of life. This sense of unity is not unique in Whitman ; he holds it in common with the mystics and many poets. Dr



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Maurice Bucke, one of Whitman's executors and most profound students, calls it cosmic consciousness. Throughout the ages men have appeared who possess powers of vision which transcend what we understand by ordinary physical vision ; it is a faculty more allied in some ways to the simple consciousness of animals, which has often surprised man by its undoubted powers of prescience. One of the characteristics of cosmic consciousness is the merging of self in the universal will, the conscious realisation of the underlying unity of personality with the whole universe. The presence of some such sense or supersense is evident throughout the poems of Walt Whitman, and without some recognition of this much of the book must remain incomprehensible. His fundamental ideas of personality, democracy, and immortality are only to be understood in the light of it ; and it is worth noting how much in Walt Whitman is actually common to what is universal in all religions, as, for instance, when he chants :

“ Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and joy and knowledge that pass all the art and argument of the man ;

And I know that the hand of God is in the elder hand of my own,

And that all men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,

And that a kelson of the creation is love.”

Like all mystics, he sees untellable things and hears “ unspeakable words ” which he can merely indicate in his poems, taking his reader, maybe, to a

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higher eminence thereby from which he, of his own will, may peer yet farther into the reality beyond the surface of things :

“ I lie abstracted, and hear beautiful tales of things and the reasons of things ;  
They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.”

The records of such moments of ecstasy are to be met with most frequently in mystical writings ; but, unlike most mystics, Whitman does not see in these beautiful abstract visions cause for the neglect of earth ; he sees in them the fulfilment of the significance of earth and the glory and consummation of material things ; for the world of the senses is no less spiritual, no less dreamlike and visionary than anything that can be imagined out of the as yet inexplicable and always mysterious universe. The clearness and firmness of his conviction on that point is his contribution to modern thought. He saw clearly all life evolving into permanency, and he saw that the transient processes towards perfection were none the less good than the final perfection itself.

“ And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present, and can be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turned to beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death.  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events are compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any.

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I will not make poems with reference to parts,  
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to  
ensemble,  
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with  
reference to all days,  
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem  
but has reference to the soul,  
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find  
there is no one nor any particle of one but has reference to  
the soul.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, without distinction of creed, caste, or colour, comes this modern prophet announcing a new evangel of acceptances, declaring his faith, shouting his news, chanting his glad tidings, sometimes boisterously, sometimes sententiously, but always with the inspired seriousness of the prophet and often in language which, though it violates all the scholastic traditions of poetry, is so beautiful, that even scholars have admitted his poems into the hierarchy of the chosen. But poetry in the literary sense is not his intention; his greatest poem is great because it is the poem of a great idea. He comes as one having something to say, something real, vital, urgent—"Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!" he calls, with splendid confidence. He democratises not only mankind, but ideas, thoughts, spirit, the whole spreading universe, in a superb dithyrambic, affirming always, as no other has affirmed since the book of Genesis was written and the work of creation was declared to be good. He does not even exclude death from his benediction. For in a truer sense than

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any before him he sees in death not merely the prelude to another life, but a necessary, desirable, and healthy part of this life. He is as confident of immortality as the most orthodox of thinkers, but more courageous in the face of death than any of them. Most poets have sought to conciliate man in the face of the mysterious fact of death ; and even religious exponents professing faith in immortality have been Death's apologists rather than the acceptors of something which must be as sane and necessary as life itself. It has remained for Walt Whitman to see and announce this truth, and he has reserved for this announcement his finest passion, his best art :

" Come, lovely and soothing Death " (he sings),  
" Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later, delicate Death.  
Praised be thy fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious ;  
And for love, sweet love—but praise ! O praise and praise,  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death."

Whitman would seem to have made words for what hitherto music alone has expressed.

In the conception of democracy Whitman applies the cosmic idea which engages his deeper and more inscrutable ponderings, to social life. The essential equality of all things is the keynote of his teaching, and this idea of equality holds good for him throughout every phase of life, in the particular no less than in the universal. The spirit of equality in the social



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state is expressed in the idea of democracy, which must be the basis and foundation of modern society and all social systems to come. At the same time Whitman recognises the existence of individuality and all that that word means. Society is a democratic organism compact of other organisms, interdependent each on each. "One's self I sing," he says, "A simple separate person, yet utter the word Democratic, the word *En-masse*." He believes in the essential power of the average thought and the average emotion. What is most lasting in the social state, most capable of urging mankind into a fuller life, is that which is common to all. It is nearer the universal will and more sacred to Whitman than anything else—it is this that he has called "the divine average." But such a belief is not inconsistent with faith in the formative and active qualities of personality.

"Produce great persons," he says, "and the rest follows," and in that thought he sets a balance to his democratic idea and justifies its existence. There is little doubt that democracy is best realised in those rare souls who, like Whitman, have absorbed and epitomised the common life, concentrating its spread and vastness into one luminous point which is capable of searching out and revealing the heart and value of its vacant thought. It is in the impressiveness of such persons, in the gift of themselves, "more precious than money," which must alone affect salvation in the average—for such men are the acme, the sum-total, of the ages that have gone before.

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This accumulated power Whitman would have infused into everyone until he stood "aplomb in the midst of irrational things," realising the essential equality and unity of himself and the universe ; not necessarily with the highest and best, not hitching, as Emerson advised, his waggon to a star, but walking the common way, sharing the common lot, conserving nothing, save the integrity of personality and throwing even that into the commonwealth :

" What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will  
take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
Scattering it freely for ever."

These lines enshrine the essential Whitman idea, and the adjustment of life to their purport would make even the fussy existence of a modern metropolis, with its " little plentiful mannikins skipping around in collars and tailed coats," a new and vital thing.

It is not, however, through personalities alone nor through the mere consciousness of equality that democracy will be made worthy and lasting. There is something else without which all the rest is useless. " Come," he sings,

" I will make the Continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
With the love of comrades,  
With the live-long love of comrades."

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Underneath the whole of his teaching this idea of comradeship runs, as it did under the life of ancient Greece in the age that produced Socrates. Yet in Whitman comradeship is made a more necessary and more intimate thing than the love which bound men together in the past ; it is deeper, better informed, and includes the social equality of woman. The tender and passionate love of friends finds full expression in the section of "Leaves of Grass" called "Calamus," and in "Drum-taps," which latter record his experiences during the Civil War. In that great struggle Whitman applied his principle to life in such a way that the most immovable are moved ; for over two years he devoted the whole of his energy to cheering the lives of the fallen soldiers in hospital at Washington, nursing and comforting thousands, giving himself freely to the wounded of Northern and Southern States alike without distinction, filling the hospital with a strange element of love, strong, inspiring, gentle, passing the love of women, as it made the stricken forget their anguish, and the defeated their shame. He saw clearly in those days of strife that the ultimate thing which would bind men and States together was not agreement on paper, force of arms, or law :

"Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,  
Be not disheartened, affection shall solve the problems of  
freedom yet,  
Those who love each other shall become invincible."<sup>2</sup>

But withal, his equality and affection are not the

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things we usually understand by such words. "My call is the call of battle," he says, "I nourish active rebellion. He going with me must go well armed." This battle is a fiercer thing than the mere clash of armed forces, it is the continuous war of life, the joyful conflict that does not seek success in peace, but in the realisation of the necessity of a still greater struggle than that just conquered; "to see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it," is the essence of his fight, the inner meaning of his victory. The attitude of Whitman is thus linked up with that idea of life which we call romantic. His ideal blazes with the light of one who does not confine romance to books and art, but of one who knows that romance begins when art and books have been left behind, and man has betaken himself to the great business of living.

Walt Whitman's poems are intended to be preludes to living, spurs and inducements to strong and free existence. Their literary value is not their first value; their first value is that they are true in the light of their singer's idea of a true poem:

"The words of all true poems give you more than poems,  
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, politics,  
war, peace, behaviour, histories, essays, daily life, and  
everything else,  
They balance ranks, colours, races, creeds, and the sexes,  
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,  
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty,  
longing, faith, love-sick.  
They prepare for death, yet are they not the finish, but  
rather the outset,



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They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content  
and full,

Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth  
of stars, to learn one of the meanings,

To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the  
ceaseless rings and never be quiet again."

That is the romance of Walt Whitman's idea, and its  
religion.

## EDWARD CARPENTER

**E**DWARD CARPENTER is the one contemporary British voice speaking with an egotism which at once places him outside the bounds of accepted thought but assures him a certain niche in the temple of suggestive heterodoxy. Whitman is perhaps the most conspicuous example of this type of thinker. He turned personality into a philosophy ; he made personality a religion, with an attendant ethic of brotherhood and an arresting ritual of nonchalance and simplicity. Of course there was nothing new in this, for effective religious expression is ever the outcome of forceful personality. The great religious founders have always made magic out of the subjective essence of the Kingdom of God. What is different in the moderns is the self-consciousness of the egoistic idea. Nietzsche has transvalued all philosophic and ethical values in the light of it ; Ibsen has used it as an introspective scalpel, laying bare the very motive of social life ; whilst Whitman and Carpenter have met on similar ground, seeking there the alembic in which all consciousness may be transmuted into something fresh and rare.

Although the name of Carpenter is invariably associated with that of Whitman, the ideas for which

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the two names stand are quite distinct, although not quite different. Carpenter rarely, in his most abandoned moments, sounds anything like a "barbaric yawp"; his song is altogether tamer than Whitman's. He has the smoother manners of the Old World, which should come just as naturally to an Englishman as the more daring mode to an American. You feel that the author of "Towards Democracy" is a poetical backwoodsman by deliberation where the author of "Leaves of Grass" is a poetical backwoodsman by nature. "Leaves of Grass" however you may like or dislike it, is a final thing in all its ruggedness; "Towards Democracy" might have been equally as eloquent in the blank verse form of Milton. Carpenter sowed his poetical wild oats in a volume of poems that were executed as strictly in the method of orthodox verse as his later and greater work is in that of heterodox. Both strike one as being a convention with him, though in the heterodox lines of "Towards Democracy" his sincerity and clearness of conception has urged him into a beauty and power of expression that in itself amounts to creation.

There is an orderliness and system about Edward Carpenter's wildest lines that Walt Whitman never attained. This no doubt is due to the fact that the former is less of a poet than a philosopher. Whitman sang because he could not help himself; Carpenter seems to sing because Whitman did. This may account for the limitations of each. For instance, there are innumerable disturbing incidents in the vocabulary

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of "Leaves of Grass" which on several occasions are the result of an inadmissible and uncultured use of the terminology of science and philosophy and the jargon of the streets. When Edward Carpenter introduces an unliterary idiom into poem or essay, which he frequently does, one feels that he does so for reasons rather than from lack of culture.

This deliberation is noticeable throughout his works ; he is a system where Whitman is an abandonment. That is practically the basis of his relationship with the American bard—he has systematised and expounded, and extended cosmic hints which are embodied in "Leaves of Grass" as naturally and as properly as the elements are embodied in nature. Edward Carpenter has captured those wild elements and set them in order. The most striking example of this lies in the fact that Whitman held aloof from all political activity. He did not associate himself with "movements," for much the same reason that nature does not associate in a separate sense with earth, air or water, but is compact of all three. He spoke in large generalisations of democracy, freedom, and so on, whereas Carpenter upholds a theory for the application of democracy, and for many years he has been actively associated with the organisations which seek to put such ideas in practice.

The three headings under which Edward Carpenter's philosophy naturally falls are, Naturalism, Democracy, and a theory of Exfoliation. Each is the



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outcome of the other, and by expounding any one of them a conclusion is arrived at which embraces the other two. In its outward aspect this philosophy amounts to a very comprehensive indictment of our social system, an indictment best expressed in the title of one of his best-known essays, "Civilisation : its Cause and Cure." His researches into the phase of human life called civilisation are an important contribution to modern social philosophy. Just as Nietzsche anticipates the passing of man and the coming of some stronger individual force, so Carpenter anticipates the passing of the era of civilisation and the substitution of an era that will combine the tonic wildness of barbaric peoples with the exalted ethics of communal life.

The distinguishing feature of civilisation is the idea of property, the sense of owning things, and this Carpenter uses as the central theme of his argument, showing how it has caused divergence from the strictly progressive path towards social unity, and produced that individual segregation which is the basis of social life to-day. The union of man with nature, with his true self, and with his fellows has been broken to make civilisation possible. Artificiality has taken the place of nature ; self-consciousness the place of simple, and its greater correlative, cosmic consciousness ; and independence the place of fellowship. The main teaching of Carpenter is the cultivation of a life organically related to natural law, and in frank obedience to its own inner necessity. " The

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Human Soul," he says, "which has wandered darkling for so many thousands of years, from its tiny spark-like germ in some low form of life to its full splendour and dignity in man, has yet to come to the knowledge of its wonderful heritage, has yet to become finally individualised and free, to know itself immortal, to resume and interpret all its past lives, and to enter in triumph into the kingdom which it has won."

In this dream of his, this "dream of the soul's slow disentanglement," his denunciation of civilisation is not in the nature of blame, it is rather the prophetic annunciation of a new life. It is the *revéillé* of another dawn. The self-consciousness that produced the phase of life which distinguished man from brute is a necessary step towards the fuller life. "To realise the perfect life, to know what, how wonderful it is—to understand that all blessedness and freedom consists in its possession—he must suffer divorce from it; the unity, the repose of his nature must be broken up; crime, disease, and unrest must enter in, and by contrast he must attain to knowledge." And his idea of equality is not the idea of sameness or uniformity, but of unity—the consciousness of the association of self with the whole of life, coupled with the greater idea that the self is not a separate thing, but a manifestation of the universal spirit, separation from which being the origin of sin.

There is an Eastern note in Edward Carpenter's interpretation of the recall of self to its ancient

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creative destiny. It was first dealt with by him under the title "Exfoliation" some years ago, and he has since elaborated the idea in "The Art of Creation" and other books. He elaborates the germinal idea of life, life surging outwards—developing form and colour, customs and institutions, shedding these as the tree sheds its foliage or the snake its skin; and he criticises man's curious attachment to the wrack of exfoliation, the husks and leaves in the byways of the process of life. The attachment prevails, and illusory states are built upon the insubstantial basis of these material things. But the time comes when the straying ego is wearied by the eternal recurrence of a pomp and circumstance that satiates but does not satisfy—like the joy spoken of by Keats, "whose hand is ever at his lips bidding adieu"—and in his anguish he denies the things he has affirmed, ignorant of the fact that neither acceptance nor refusal of things in themselves can alter the curve of existence.

Another conception of life is necessary, and Carpenter offers this in the idea of a super-consciousness which having manifested his desires, feelings, and thoughts in the phenomena of life, still exists and is still capable of new manifestations, of creating new worlds. The new creativeness will, however, move no farther at the instigation of haphazard desire, but by the dominance of will. By recognising this principle Carpenter says that all life is change.

The world-ego which throughout the ages has been building up and slowly perfecting the expression of

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itself, is "there" still. We are that ego. It is not an alien tyrant dominating us, it is our very self. It is not somewhere back in the dark infinite. It is here.

In this idea Edward Carpenter has presented a bold conception of man as creator, of man as the tyrant of circumstance rather than, what he is now, its creature. As every seed is latent in the sap of every tree, so is the whole of life latent in the human ego; and as all life has been recreating itself at the demand of consciousness, and intensifying its powers in the cumulative circles of its recurrent experiences, so the stream of tendencies will continue to operate. But not by the life-force using the details of nature—trees or animals or the minuter organisms, which have hitherto been the blind instruments of its will, but by man turning the experiences of his countless lives into a knowledge and power commensurate with that of the whole of life, and thus becoming a conscious force, a willing ally in the universal march towards fuller consciousness yet, and greater power.

This idea will help the student to consider calmly the many negatives in Carpenter's philosophy, although in its entirety his idea is always positive. Like Whitman's it is an affirmation of the worth of all things and a recognition of the seemliness of seemingly conflicting elements. His negatives are concerned with those innumerable objects which stand between man and the freeing of the self; and as civilisation is the embodiment of a system based upon man's



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separation from his true self, it follows that the details of the system should be first attacked. But here again it is not a call to chaos, as a demand that men should forthwith shed their civilised customs might well be. It is more in the nature of a hint to those who are equal to realising their past lives and investing them with a new splendour, which, in its turn, is nothing less than the building of the New Jerusalem out of the dim and pathless future, now established within the self, like the seed within the tree.

The way is so perilous, the adventure so exacting, that the material objects we value most will be so many encumbrances. That is why Edward Carpenter advises us to scrap our obsolete customs and accumulations of civilised property. That is the meaning of his demand for a return to nature. His call to a simplicity of life is not a call to an easier life; it is the call to a simplicity that another thinker has called "the last refuge of complexity." It is a call to an intenser life, a life consciously welded into personal power—"to be yourself—to have measureless trust, to enjoy all, to possess nothing." The attainment is through freedom and comradeship: freedom from all controlling forces. "What it is to command and be master of this wondrous body with all its passions and powers, to truly possess it—that it is to command and possess all things; that it is to create." And he sees in fellowship with all men the external symbol of unity with all life. "To radiate love wherever he goes—to move in and out accepted," and to find personal service in the

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service of humanity of which the fully conscious ego is consciously an inseparable part.

“ For united to that which you really are, you are indeed beautiful ; united to yourself you are strong ; united to yourself you are already in the hearts of those you love.

“ But disunited you are none of these things—

“ And how shall men desire a mere shell, or how will you offer them a husk, saying, there is fruit within, when there is no fruit, but only vacancy ? ”

Edward Carpenter has not been content merely to express this view of life in philosophical terms ; recognising the propaganda value of art he has put it into poetry, and he has applied his ideas in the realms of practical sociology, and taken his part as lecturer and propagandist in the social movements of his day. The ideas expressed in the passionate utterance of the poems in “ Towards Democracy,” many passages of which have an original beauty and power quite new in our language, are but re-interpreted in the philosophic essays. Different aspects of social life are also specialised in the light of humanitarian problems such as vivisection, prison reform, the rationalisation of science, problems of industry, sex, health, and empire. Besides this he has made an anthology of all the principal modern and classical references to comradeship, which, apart from its charm as a literary anthology, throws much light upon what has been called homogenic love ; and he is the editor of a

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Labour song book and the composer of both words and music of several revolutionary songs, including "England, Arise," which has become the "Marseillaise" of the British revolutionary movement.

Edward Carpenter the man corresponds with his work more exactly than do most thinkers. His life is an expression of his teaching, for, like several of the modern artist-philosophers, he believes in propaganda by personal example. Born at Brighton in 1844, he entered Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and became 19th Wrangler in 1868; he was a Fellow of his college, and lecturer, and afterwards served as curate under the Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice, which in itself was a sufficient spur to an attitude of social criticism and reconstruction. But the days of a university became too narrow for his purpose in life, and he relinquished his Fellowship and Holy Orders, and left Cambridge in 1874. Later he lectured under the University Extension Scheme, chiefly at Sheffield, finally settling in a small cottage at Holmsfield, about five miles south of that typically modern and commercial city. Here he still lives, among the Derbyshire hills, with his friend and companion, George Merroll. The cottage, a simple two-storeyed brick structure, at whose erection Carpenter personally assisted, stands in an acre or so of garden and orchard, just off the roadway, the back windows looking out on the Derbyshire hills. At the bottom of the garden there is a running beck, and beside it a small hut, in which "Towards Democracy" was written. There are one

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or two philosophic friends in the neighbouring cottages of the hamlet, one of whom makes sandals of the pattern introduced into England by Carpenter.

In appearance Edward Carpenter is of slight build, medium height, with hair and close-cut beard turning grey. His bearing is easy and unassuming, and the kindly look in his somewhat dreamy eyes is a characteristic of his frank and unconventional friendliness of manner, which is extended to all, without distinction of condition or culture. With the exception of one or two travel-breaks, he has lived his life of ideas at Holmsfield since 1882. In 1884 he visited the United States of America, where he met Emerson, and stayed for a time with Walt Whitman. In 1890 he visited India and Ceylon, a journey recorded in his fascinating book of travel, "From Adam's Peak to Elephanta." And it was in Ceylon that he had the rare experience of a prolonged association with a Gnani—one of those initiates of the Eastern faith who seem to have a firmer grasp upon the mystery of things than was ever dreamt of by Occidental thinker, and he has done something towards introducing that Eastern philosophy, which is beginning to tinge our thoughts with strange hues, into the West.

Such is Edward Carpenter, poet and philosopher, living a life born of a new outlook, symbol of a new age. In many ways he is a step towards Walt Whitman's idea of the poet of the future: loving the earth and the sun and the animals, despising riches,



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giving alms to everyone that asks, standing up for the stupid and the crazy, devoting his income and labour to others, hating tyrants, having patience and indulgence towards the people, taking off his hat to nothing known or unknown, or to any man or number of men. And above all, fulfilling to his best ability the place in life he desires to fill after satisfying himself that a certain path is the right one—for that, after all, is everything, and the only real value of philosophy or conviction.

“ I arise out of the dewy night and shake my wings.

“ Tears and lamentations are no more. Life and death lie stretched below me. I breathe the sweet æther blowing of the breath of God.

“ Deep as the universe is my life—and I know it ; nothing can dislodge the knowledge of it ; nothing can destroy, nothing can harm me.

“ Joy, joy arises—I arise. The sun darts overpowering piercing rays of joy through me, the night radiates it from me.

“ I take wings through the night and pass through all the wildernesses of the worlds, and the old dark holds of tears and death—and return with laughter, laughter, laughter.”

Edward Carpenter does not always rise to the heights of such rapture. “ Towards Democracy ” is not inspired on every page, and very often the big seriousness of the man makes in his essays for positive

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dullness. But what of that ? He is never dull as mere learning can be dull ; his uninspired passages are never as lustreless as the uninspired work of academic writers. When he is dull his dullness is a fault of his very earnestness, an effect of his righteousness. He strives to state clearly and minutely what he knows in his own heart is worth stating, and when he does this, as he does very often, with directness and passion, he enters the realms of the bards and the masters of the imagination-propelled idea. And if he does not always take wings through the night (and the day as well) and pass through all the wildernesses of the worlds, and the dark holds of tears and death—returning with laughter, laughter, laughter, he does always stand for that in modern thought which is frank, honest and creative.

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**I**T is difficult to say how far climate determines temperament, but there is little doubt that it does play a considerable part in the making of mind and all those intangible phases of life which we group together under the scientific term, psychology ; just in the same way as it is known to mould and form physique. As an outcome of this idea scientists have pointed out a tendency in the European American to revert to the physical characteristics of the aborigines of his country—to the hatchet-head and copper skin of the native he is gradually civilising out of existence—and in the same manner we may trace some climatic influence in the development of the American mind and its artistic expression. For, in spite of the reflected glories of European culture, America not yet having passed her period of absorption, there is, of course, something individual in the mental attitude of American men of letters. True, they have not yet produced a literature indigenous to the United States, still, and in spite of an obvious harking back to the art and philosophic standards of mother-lands, there is a definite flavour about the best American literature of to-day, an atmosphere, an elusive something which does not belong to the Old World ; and we may be

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safe in assuming that something to be the expression of the spirit of the New World, although, even now, it is grafted upon the ideals of the Old.

This effort of geographical America to assert herself through her alien brood usually takes the form of an urgency for action, a direct and impulsive energy, a conceit of moral strenuousness. It is as though America were a great will, and joying only in that fact. But this probably is only a phase ; America has a purpose, even though it is as yet enmeshed in abstractions and experiments. It has shone through the exalted irreverence of her best minds, in their restiveness, their attitude towards liberty, and the massive enterprise of her ingenuity. We see the idea-grafting at work in a writer like Walt Whitman, who might easily have remained a fine specimen of workman in any other land, but in this new land he is illuminated with prophecy, and he fills the ages with barbaric songs of a nonchalant democracy to come. And again Ralph Waldo Emerson, naturally a studious quietist, is touched to light and flashes forth a wisdom which turns his mortal readers into transient gods.

But more American than Emerson, if less than Walt Whitman, was Henry David Thoreau. He was a rugged person, and, like Whitman, could work at many trades ; but he left for a time the haunts of men in order to realise that self which the latter preferred to seek in crowded cities. His, probably, is the voice of the bracing element in the American atmosphere. He sought like Emerson to utter a



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philosophy that would be a stimulus to men, but, unlike Emerson, Thoreau made a departure from the studious habit, he struck a new attitude by making a personal experiment. Like Diogenes, he renounced the encumbrances of his age, and though hardly living in a tub, he reverted to primal simplicity by living for many months in a hut. He made, as it were, a suburb for himself, consisting of his own tiny habitation and his own full mind, on the fringe of the haunts of man.

Thoreau was born in 1817. He was of French and Scotch descent, a racial combination which probably contributed to the fluidity of idea and shrewdness of thought which characterise his work. Throughout his youth he lived in an atmosphere of ideas in the quiet town of Concord, New England ; he imbibed ideas at home. His mother was an imaginative woman with a melodramatic interest in the Abolitionist movement, and the Thoreau household was a centre of Abolitionist propaganda and the place of refuge of many a fugitive. But such an environment might have done no more than turn the future philosopher into an Abolitionist agitator ; no mean thing, of course, but obviously limited. As a matter of fact, Thoreau was an agitator in the cause of the emancipation of slaves, and in that propaganda he exercised both pluck and eloquence, as is proved by his defence of John Brown, the record of which is now included in his printed works.

But Thoreau came under the influence of the most

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irresistible intellectual force America has yet produced. He read Emerson ; and in early manhood became a member of that group of intellectuals of whom Emerson was the genial but austere head. Emerson and he became friends, and he immediately associated himself with the high thinking of all the earnest folk, including Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, and the Alcotts, who made the quiet little village of Concord a place of pilgrimage for the wise and the wayward of the world's intelligence. Soon he was one of the chief figures of that phase of the romantic movement inaugurated in America by Emerson, and known as Transcendentalism.

It must not be imagined that Thoreau became a disciple and imitator of Emerson, he was a disciple only in the sense that he insisted upon himself, after the Emersonian formula. What there is of Emerson in his work is derivative in the same way as Emerson himself is derivative. The only originality is born of personal expression, and this Thoreau had. He fed on the ideas that were in the atmosphere of the Concord circle, and rummaged, like the rest of them, among the ideas of Europe and the then half-forgotten East, turning what thought stuff he acquired, either directly or indirectly, into a form peculiarly his own.

Thoreau's philosophy, like his life, was more rugged than that of Emerson ; one pictures Emerson as a dignified, respectable person, very suave and punctilious, in an environment of books. But Thoreau strikes one as having been somewhat disreputable :

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a superior sort of tramp, with uncertain and ungainly habits, whose polite friends, one might believe, would readily disown him if encountered publicly on the Sabbath! This was the result of the Emersonian formula. Come what may, you were to be yourself. Perhaps it was the sentimental camp-followers of Emerson and Thoreau who were the only real Transcendentalists, interpreting the Emersonian idea of egoism as meaning, "Be your better self," which is what most moral philosophers have taught with small regard for transcendent egoism.

Thoreau stood for the more courageous idea, possible to the few only, to the chosen, the idea of doing what you want to do—come what may, the idea of holding yourself indifferently towards everything that obtrudes between self and intuition. His method was that process of eliminating from life all but what is essential, which is nowadays miscalled, the simple life. For the simplicity of such a line of action is very relative. There are complexities in its pursuit which would fill the habitually luxurious with awe.

The most remarkable incident in the wilful endeavours of Thoreau was his Walden experiment, which, if it had had no further results, has produced one of the most delightful books, even from the merely literary point of view, in the English language. For Thoreau coupled the high seriousness of an unique and picturesque personality with a rare and felicitous gift of vigorous prose, and he was master of sly wit with an ironic sting in its tail. He has not the clever-

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ness of Emerson, his prose does not scintillate until one is teased and dazzled out of one's individuality ; it has a steadier light, but a light that laughs, or, rather, smiles occasionally. His method of interpreting his idea of life is such that one is not so much dominated by its author's personality as put into more intimate relationship with one's own. Few of the readers of "Walden" want to become hermits, but it is conceivable that after reading it they may want to become themselves, and possess some knowledge of how to carry out the wish.

As a matter of fact, Thoreau's life was a continuous experiment. He liked a margin to his days, and so he endeavoured to reduce to a minimum the drudgery we all endure for the sake of subsistence. He was an idler in the eyes of commerce and of those who set material pursuits above spiritual—but his literary work proves him to have had remarkable energy and an inexhaustible power of application in directions he considered worthy. There was, nevertheless, something of the odd-job man in his nature, for besides being a tutor, author, and lecturer, he was at different times a surveyor, a carpenter, a gardener, and it is on record that he once turned an honest penny by white-washing a fence. But this, after all, was merely what society demanded of him, it was not his real business, that was in quite a different line, as he himself was aware. "For many years I was self-appointed inspector of snowstorms and rainstorms, and did my duty faithfully ; surveyor, if not of highways, then



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of forest paths and across-lot routes, keeping them open, and ravines bridged and passable at all seasons, where the public heel had testified to their utility."

Thoreau was, in fact, like Walt Whitman, an inspired loafer. To this he added an almost supersensual power of observation, a predilection for nature, and a keen sense of the importance of his own soul ; but the last did not destroy his sympathy with every other soul that had become conscious of itself ; this made him a teacher of men. He was twenty-eight years old when, in the year 1845, he borrowed an axe and commenced hewing pines in the woods near Walden Pond, on the outskirts of Concord, preparatory to building the hut in which he dwelt for some two years, moving " confidently in the direction of his dreams."

The experiment in hermitage must not be taken as an instruction, but as a demonstration. Thoreau had no illusions about it, he knew very well what he was doing. He was a man of more than the usual amount of common-sense, and he never tricked himself into believing that his own experiment in the application of a philosophic idea to mundane affairs was an action to be imitated literally. And besides, in his inmost heart he knew that his reaching after " the tonic wildness of nature " was partially the result of his own physical weakness. For like other virile spirits, such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Keats, Thoreau's had to endure the inconvenience of abiding in a consumptive body, and modern science has now proved

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that his desire for the fields and woods was the result of a sound instinct. Again the experiment, in spite of its remoteness from comfortable habits, was not remote from the only sort of social life which appealed to the philosopher ; it was performed before the only people who would then have understood his aim, the intellectual coteries of Concord ; and the loneliness which was mitigated for him by reason of his knowledge that our planet was in the Milky Way, was further mitigated by the fact of Thoreau's kinship with the members of the Concord coterie, who were his frequent visitors.

His desire to meet life without the conveniences of towns, to address himself to an unknown master, was rewarded, it may be granted, in that deepening of consciousness which all who strike new paths acquire, and it quickened also and proved his hitherto theoretic negation of conformity. For he left the woods, as he truly says, for as good a reason as he went there. " I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond side ; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men ; and so the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world—how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity ! I did not wish to make a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of

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the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now."

This was a natural outcome of his aim in life. His integrity was always tentative; he did not seek repose. The Promised Land was not at the end of his journey, but in every step of his pilgrimage. He was a strange combination of scholar and vagabond, with the poetic sense so often a characteristic of the latter. There is even pedantry in his work, as though his Harvard experience could not be killed by his rugged attitude towards life. He was in one sense a polished Whitman in thought, though more unkempt than Whitman ever was in habit. He was as paradoxical as the Nature he loved; inquisitive to a degree of the hidden ways of life and of the ways of Nature as exemplified in wood and stream, yet he loved to adopt a callous and indifferent pose in the face of social happenings, or even in the face of things which might reasonably have interested ordinary mortals. "I would not run round the corner to see the world blow up," he once observed; but he would spend hours in watching the eccentricities of a diving bird on Walden Pond. And with all his spirituality, which urged him to reduce the needs of material life to a bare minimum, he was not concerned as to the hereafter. "One world at a time," was how he rebuked the friend who wanted to lead his mind to the idea of another world when he was on his death-bed.

"Let us spend the day as deliberately as Nature"

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(he says), “ and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito’s wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation ; let company come and let company go, let the bells ring and the children cry,—determined to make a day of it. Why should we knock under and go with the stream ? Let us not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner, situated in the meridian shallows. Weather this danger and you are safe, for the rest of the way is down hill. With unrelaxed nerves, with morning vigour, sail by it, looking another way, tied to the mast like Ulysses. If the engine whistles, let it whistle till it is hoarse for its pains. If the bell rings, why should we run ? We will consider what kind of music they are like. Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion which covers the globe, through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call *reality*, and say, This is, and no mistake ; and then begin, having a *point d’appui*, below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or perhaps a gauge, not a Nilometer, but a Realometer, that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from



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time to time. If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities ; if we are alive, let us go about our business."

His transcendentalism was thus no chimera, it was a real thing. It was the packing of each moment with the utmost life. " To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts," he said, and that is the essence of his idea. Not the art of getting, or even doing, but of being, that is his philosophy ; and his life was an experiment consciously carried out to that end. Life to him was real when individuality ruled circumstance ; life dependent upon circumstance was below the standard of his consideration. He said he could live without the aid of a furnishing warehouse, and he stood for a soul freed from the necessity of doctrinal upholstery. He possessed the spirit of a boy, backed by the wisdom of the ages, and he learned how to taste all the stars and all the heavens in a crust of bread.

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**S**OMETHING in the nature of Richard Jefferies made him other than a part of the human life of his surroundings. He was solitary everywhere ; in the country and in the town—in London, in Paris. In his old home at Coate, in Wiltshire, he had an upper room into which he would retire with the classics. He was a byword with the villagers. “Seed ye owt on the Downs ?” one would inquire of another at sunset. “Nobbut Dick Jefferies moonin’ about,” would be the reply. He always mooned about. The results are to be found in certain essays which belong to what is permanent in our literature. To the villagers his brooding personality must have been strange, fantastic. Like Thoreau, he demanded a margin to his life ; a margin for the dreams and reveries of inspired idleness. This must have seemed rampant laziness to the Wiltshire peasantry, who fill their little hour with obvious and laborious toil. He could have been none the less strange to the respectable folk of Surbiton, when he lived among them ; as strange as London was to him when he stood at Mansion House Corner absorbed in the maelstrom of traffic that surged around without absorbing him.

It often happens that the artist is a stranger among

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men, sequestered and remote among rational things ; absorbed only in the essentials of the life that moves around him, filtering them through his personality and retaining only what is permanent, lasting, true, according to his light, for expression in terms of art so that others may see what he sees and feel as he feels. He does not hold the mirror up to Nature—that were child's play—and yet he is not unlike a child imagining the real in the unreal, or, as men say, the unreal in the real, for the things seen by the rest of men, before the artist guides his vision, are the mere husks of what he sees, and, as the dreamer has proved so often, the mere phantasms of what they are. Such inward rapture makes him different, sets him apart, perhaps not always for his good or the world's. Richard Jefferies stood thus apart, absorbing the warm life of a southern English shire and uttering it again in a prose of exquisite balance, and at times so passionately that its beauty seemed heavy with melancholy.

The life of this interpreter of Nature is a tale of misguided endeavour and physical pain. Disease stalked with him always, and for many years his genius lay fallow beside the drudgery of literary hack-work. Provincial journalism devoured the readiness of his pen, and he scattered his young genius upon fictions for which it was not made. Perhaps Jefferies never realised that he was not a novelist, and had it not been for the accidental and prosaic incident of a letter to *The Times* he might have been weaving his

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energy into fictions, the best of which were only passable, until his early death ; for he did not reach the age of forty. His last years were a fierce struggle with poverty and illness, both intensified by the fire of a nature which neither sought nor found respite in social or friendly intercourse. Yet it was during these years of pain and worry that his best work was produced ; in fact, everything that has any lasting quality in his work was done during the last ten years of his life, and the best of all during the last five years, during years when increasing bodily weakness and material stress must have been surmounted only by heroic spiritual pluck. This is all the more remarkable when it is known that he was not free from that inevitable attendant upon poverty and disease—spiritual and intellectual apathy—the involuntary acceptance of living as a negative rather than a positive thing. The gaunt mood was never far away, and he alone could conquer it. “ Whatever I wish to do,” he wrote, “ feebleness forbids. I think I should like a good walk. No. I think I should like to write. No. I think I should like to rest. No. Always No to everything.” Traces of the battle are to be found in the hectic flush of his thought, and the, at times, febrile earnestness of his prose.

Richard Jefferies stands with Thoreau among those observers of nature who have added something to literature. There is, however, considerable difference in their attitudes towards life, although the lives of both were cut short by disease, and both were sceptics



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from the point of view of accepted religious ideas. There was a bolder and more joyous note in the life of the American, and although he made a hermit of himself by Walden Pond for two years, and walked among his kind wearing a halo of cynicism, there was more of the social being in him than in Jefferies. His transcendental egoism, too, made him laugh at fate. Jefferies, in the same circumstances, was inclined to curse. Thoreau looked upon the world with the eyes of one who wished to know ; Jefferies demanded to know. " Only that day dawns to which we are awake," said the former, adding, with splendid confidence, " There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star." But Jefferies, whilst uttering similar ideas to those behind the optimism of Thoreau, could never utter them with the same nonchalance. He knew and was never tired of saying to the soul that time and space were as naught, and that our present heritage was happiness. " How willingly would I strew the paths of all with flowers ! " he says. " How beautiful a delight to make the world joyous ! " None but the sad desire to make the world happy, and a haunting sense of the burden of life is always behind the thoughts of Richard Jefferies. It fills his faith in the possibility of a deeper joy with irrevocable gloom ; and, with all his passionate love of the beauties of Nature, he is never fully awake to the day. It is only in moments of ecstasy that he is properly conscious of the coincidence of the present and eternity.

The chief characteristic of his literary work is his

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faculty of infusing words with the intensity of his own nature. His essays are pictures of life and Nature seen through the eyes of one to whom eyes were a secondary consideration. He felt his way into Nature, and seemed to realise her mysterious way by intuition ; and yet what recorders those eyes of his were! Nothing escaped them, not merely in detail but in the mass. But his aim was by no means to record merely a sensuous delight in exuberant Nature. The colour of flowers, the song of birds ; the winds and their whispered eloquence among leaves ; the diapason of the storm ; the grave and gay movements of animals ; the green and russet of the bridle-path ; the English hedgerows quick with life and song ; the blue sheen of the unripe oats, and the gold of ripened corn, were but symbols of a deeper soul life. "The chief use of matter," he says, "is to demonstrate to us the existence of the soul." It is this existence which he realises so well, and his literature will live longer by reason of the fact that he has been able to permeate it with this realisation than by all that skilled use of the art of the pen with which his books abound.

Among his Nature essays there is one so perfect as to stand out above all the rest. It is called "The Pageant of Summer," and it contains the most exalted and passionate interpretation of the beauty and luxury of that season to be found, not only in English prose, it is unequalled in English poetry. It is the very incarnation of the idea of June, that month of fulness and maturity before the "mortal

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ripening of nature," heralds autumnal days—the wheat-stack and the long winter silence. He seems to have imbibed the season through all the senses, to have steeped it in his ardent emotions and striving intellect, and then to have poured it forth like song. I know of no essay, outside of the devotional writers, possessing quite the same quiet rapture. It is that still, apparently cold, but actually white-hot rapture met with in John Henry Newman, in Jeremy Taylor, in Anthony Trahearne. But there is nothing of worship in it as they understood worship, yet it is worship none the less, the enraptured worship of animate things. Richard Jefferies must have stared at them with his whole being until he stared himself into ecstasy, and become one with the infinitude of exuberant Nature. In this prose poem he has attained the supreme thing in art—inevitability. This symphony in words might always have been—it has the poise of a swimming fish, the balance of a bird on the wing—and the mind and heart of a man to communicate to men the sense of such poise and balance, the secret Nature tells only to her favourites :

“ Straight go the white petals to the heart ; straight the mind’s glance goes back to how many other pageants of summer in old times ! When perchance the sunny days were even more sunny ; when the stilly oaks were full of mystery, lurking like the Druid’s mistletoe in the midst of their mighty branches. A glamour in the heart came back to it again from

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every flower ; as the sunshine was reflected from them so the feeling of the heart returned tenfold. To the dreamy summer haze love gave a deep enchantment, the colours were fairer, the blue more lovely in the lucid sky. Each leaf finer, and the gross earth enamelled beneath the feet. A sweet breath on the air, a soft warm hand in the touch of the sunshine, a glance in the gleam of the rippled waters, a whisper in the dance of the shadows. The ethereal haze lifted the heavy oaks, and they were buoyant on the mead, the rugged bark was chastened and no longer rough ; each slender flower beneath them again refined. There was a presence everywhere, though unseen, on the open hills, and not shut out under the dark pines. Dear were the June roses then because for another gathered. Yet even dearer now, with so many years as it were upon the petals ; all the days that have been before, all the heart-throbs, all our hopes lie in this opened bud. Let not the eyes grow dim, look not back, but forward ; the soul must uphold itself like the sun. Let us labour to make the heart grow larger as we become older, as the spreading oak gives more shelter. That we could but take to the soul some of the greatness and the beauty of the summer."

Truly he calls this essay "The Pageant of Summer," for such it is, moving in picture and pictured thoughts before the mind like nothing else ; rising and falling with the author's rapture, and culminating in high



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rhapsody, even down to the final human thought, which is the man Jefferies :

“ I cannot leave it ; I must stay under the old tree in the midst of the long grass, the luxury of the leaves, and the song in the very air. I seem as if I could feel all the glowing life the sunshine gives and the south wind calls to being. The endless grass, the endless leaves, the immense strength of the oak expanding, the unalloyed joy of finch and blackbird ; from all of them I receive a little. Each gives me something of the pure joy they gather for themselves. In the blackbird’s melody one note is mine ; in the dance of the leaf shadows the formed maze is for me, though the motion is theirs ; the flowers with a thousand faces have collected the kisses of the morning. Feeling with them, I receive some, at least, of their fulness of life. Never could I have enough ; never stay long enough—whether here or whether lying on the shorter sward under the sweeping and graceful birches, or on the thyme-scented hills. Hour after hour, and still not enough. Or walking the footpath was never long enough, or my strength sufficient to endure till the mind was weary. The exceeding beauty of the earth, in her splendour of life, yields a new thought with every petal. The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours when we really live, so that the longer we can stay among these things so much the more is snatched from inevitable Time. Let the shadow advance upon

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the dial—I can watch it with equanimity while it is there to be watched. It is only when the shadow is *not* there, when the clouds of winter cover it, that the dial is terrible. The invisible shadow goes on and steals from us. But now, while I can see the shadow of the tree and watch it slowly gliding along the surface of the grass, it is mine. These are the only hours that are not wasted—these hours that absorb the soul and fill it with beauty. This is real life, and all else is illusion, or mere endurance. Does this reverie of flowers and waterfall and song form an ideal, a human ideal, in the mind? It does; much the same ideal that Phidias sculptured of man and woman filled with a godlike sense of the violet fields of Greece, beautiful beyond thought, calm as my turtle-dove before the lurid lightning of the unknown. To be beautiful and to be calm, without mental fear, is the ideal of nature. If I cannot achieve it, at least I can think it.”

Though Jefferies’ work must live by reason of his Nature essays, he pursued other literary ways: novel and fantasy, folk-lore and sociology. Yet in all of his books—in “Amaryllis” no less than in “The Gamekeeper at Home,” or “The Toilers of the Fields,” in “Sir Bevis,” and “Wood Magic,” no less than in “The Story of My Heart”—there are passages of passionate earth-worship and inspired nature-vision. In all his books there are matchless cameos from nature; and in the last of them there is a constant

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utterance of the pantheism which was so intimate a part of his being, and which found its fullest expression in "The Story of My Heart." It is the passionate love of the inner life of Nature that makes the essays of Richard Jefferies so different from those of other poet-naturalists. White of Selborne saw in Nature a never-ending subject for memorabilia; John Burroughs enjoys and admires, much as a hungry boy does an apple; Thoreau sees in her the ethics of individuality—but Richard Jefferies, like Walt Whitman, sees himself in her; he weds her with a love that has less of the earth in it than the love of Whitman, with a love half reverent, half mystical. Nature for him is no more a series of separate events than life is a series of separate events for the mystics: he would be at one with it all, striving, urging his mind into the very heart of life, calling to the future, drumming at the door of mystery, yearning for a known eternity yet all the while telling himself that "It is eternity now, it always was eternity, and always will be."

Like the mystics, he has moments of intense emotion, when the separate self seems to become merged in the universal—then he is no longer the individual Richard Jefferies, but one with all things. Such moments are recorded in his works, and more particularly in that ardent record of the inner life he called "The Story of My Heart." Therein he tells of intimate communion with Nature, and of remote experiences of the soul, almost beyond the sphere of

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time. He clung to the idea of immortality with a sense of mysterious doubt which gave his strongest material affirmations a certain wistfulness. But there the intellect of Jefferies recognised no proof that the soul continued its life or not after bodily death, and he bids himself neither hope nor fear.

At least (he says) I am living. I have enjoyed the idea of immortality and the idea of my own soul. If then, after death, I am resolved without exception in earth, air, and water, and the spirit goes out like a flame, still I shall have had the glory of that thought.

His attitude towards life is that of one demanding more intimacy with the infinite, more consciousness of eternity, a deeper soul-life. He goes to the Downs, and in a lonely place he faces the unknown, and with the rapture of religious fervour he becomes another voice crying in the wilderness. "Open my mind," he prays, "give my soul to see, let me live it now on earth, while I hear the burring of the larger bees, the sweet air in the grass, and watch the yellow wheat wave beneath me. Sun and earth and sea, night and day—these are the least of things. Give me soul-life."

His position is that of one who just feels the existence of a realm of ideas beyond the day. It is not any more tangible than that, yet the very thought itself is a contribution to thought, and he is content, even in the face of the possibility of annihilation, with that thought alone. To have imagined something higher and stronger than, not only the human soul, but an existence "higher, better and more perfect than



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deity" suffices him. In the conception that there exists a range of ideas outside any that have been thought or imagined he lays claim to the discovery of another idea. But, after all, the discovery, though new to him, is by no means new to philosophy or religion. Richard Jefferies was as remote from modern thought as he was from modern social life, and yet he was in the midst of each, and profoundly affected by each. He was an unconscious product of modern tendencies, and his isolated individuality is no more marked than in the fact that he uttered the advanced ideas of his day in the full belief that they were his alone.

His conception of mankind under the tyranny of the past is full of suggestion, and he is eager that all leanings upon what has been should be turned into an energy which would render tradition unnecessary. "Erase the past from the mind," he says, "stand face to face with the real now—and work out all anew." The chaos of social life fills him with wonder. "In twelve thousand written years," he says again, "the world has not yet built itself a house, nor filled a granary, nor organised itself for its own comfort." In the development of this thought Jefferies comes into line with the ripest thought of the day; with the men who see society as it is, not through the rosy hues of sentiment, and who see also society as it might be, and who strive with what power they possess to realise something of the dream of joyful work and, what is just as necessary, joyful leisure, without

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the ignoble hurry and waste that so characterise so much of our present existence. And in no mood is Richard Jefferies more sanguine and so free from that despondence which broods over his happiest works than in the desire that his fellows "may enjoy their days, and the earth, and the beauty of this beautiful world; that they may rest by the sea and dream; that they may dance and sing, and eat and drink." "I will work towards that end with all my heart," he says.

## WILLIAM MORRIS

**T**HERE are those who would separate the ideas of William Morris from his art, and, although they are fully entitled to do so, if it please them, they are not entitled to do so on the authority of William Morris. No artist appreciated better than he the interdependence of art, ideas and affairs. And, above all, Morris knew better than anybody else that Morris the artist, the poet, the craftsman, was Morris the Socialist ; and that, conversely, Morris the Socialist was Morris the artist, the poet, the craftsman. This has disturbed those of his friends and admirers who object to his dreams and practical advocacy of Utopia ; but that he was a Utopist is, nevertheless, a fact, to be accepted or rejected according to individual taste ; and although those who reject it may still find pleasure in an academic appreciation of his poems and other art works, they should never forget that Morris himself did not encourage that particular kind of appreciation.

Even in his early university days his mind was concerned with the strange and ironic lack of association between art and social life ; but at that time, under the influence, no doubt, of the mediævalism of the Oxford Movement, he had hope of realising

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a fuller association of art and life only in a cloistral retirement from the sordid strife of the times ; and it was the dream of his early manhood to devote his fortune to the foundation of a monastic brotherhood for himself and his friends. With the passing of the years, however, and a sympathetic reading of Carlyle's " Past and Present," and the works of John Ruskin, combined with an intimate and profound study of Gothic architecture and the social process and conditions of mediæval craftsmanship, he evolved for himself a working combination of political economy and æsthetics to which he adhered throughout the whole of his energetic career.

Although William Morris has written poems which will endure as long as the English language, he had no very great respect for the purely literary life. He was essentially a man of affairs and could neither understand nor appreciate anyone making a career of poetry. He would write his poems at odd moments on any handy piece of paper, and in any place—even a room full of talking people. On one such occasion the talkers stopped their talking when he started writing, stopped obviously out of deference to the act of poetic creation, but Morris begged them to proceed with their talk—" I am only writing poetry," said he. This attitude to what is generally believed to be the most cloistral of the arts helps one to understand the essential, the socially dynamic William Morris.

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## WILLIAM MORRIS

The key-thought to the ideas of William Morris is design : design in art, design in craft, design in social life. The idea of design meant more to him than it had ever meant to any man before his time. Other ages had, to some extent, practised the idea of design as he understood it, and the study of such ages had aided him in the formulation of his principles, but they had not been conscious of design as such. In Morris, the craftsman, design became not only an elaborate and self-conscious thing, but it sprang, as it should do, and as it did spontaneously in the Middle Ages, out of the quality, the very nature of the material and the personality of the craftsman. At the same time Morris, as the practical expression of so many crafts, resembled more a commanding art personality of the Renaissance, a Michael Angelo or a Leonardo da Vinci, than an almost anonymous craftsman of the Middle Ages.

Morris realised the importance of design in mediæval craftsmanship ; it appealed to him naturally as a youth, and he would devote long hours to the study of it. But it was Ruskin's theory of Gothic which fully opened his eyes to the inner and social meanings of the excellent craftsmanship of the past. From Ruskin he learnt the lesson that excellence in craftsmanship could only result from human labour joyfully performed ; and, years afterwards, he did honour to his master by printing an edition of "The Nature of Gothic," the book from which he adopted this principle, at the Kelmscott Press, prefacing the

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reprint with some gracious words of his own, in the course of which he says that in future days "The Nature of Gothic" will be "considered as one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century."

There, however, or very nearly there, Morris and Ruskin part. Ruskin was always a mediævalist, Morris was a modernist. Ruskin would have, with certain modifications, restored the past; he stated, quite clearly, in the book he described as "the truest, rightest worded, and most serviceable" he had written that he was not a Socialist, but a Tory of the old school. Morris just as frankly looked to the future and announced himself a Socialist. The past for him was the leaping-off place for the Utopias. It is true, though, that at a later date Ruskin accepted the term Socialist—"I am a communist, reddest of the red," he wrote in "*Fors Clavigera*," and in a letter to Mr S. C. Cockerell, in 1886, he says, "Of course, I am a Socialist of the most stern sort, but I am also a Tory of the sternest sort. I am silent now because no one could understand a word I said, but see '*Fors Clavigera*' *between the lines*."

Morris would go back, to be sure, but only to pick up the lost tradition of good workmanship, from thence he would move forwards. He found this good workmanship in the Middle Ages, when the Craft Guild was at the height of its powers. Every surviving thing of that period made by the hand of man has in it a witchery of organic beauty combined with

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utility which has only been attained on few occasions since the break-up of the Guild system. Morris asked himself why these articles were so much more beautiful and so much more durable than similar products of our own time ; and he found the answer in the facts that these things were produced under conditions which had for their aims excellence and durability rather than immediate financial gain ; and that they were produced by men who not only knew the people who were ultimately to use their products, but who had been trained in the making of complete articles and not merely a part of an article, as is customary in that "division of labour" which modern commercial methods have made inevitable.

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Morris devoted the best years of his life to a revival of craftsmanship on these lines. For that reason he started the workshops at Merton Abbey and Queen Square and the famous shop in Oxford Street, and his fabrics, tapestries and chintzes, his wallpapers, his stained-glass and, later, his Kelmscott Press books, have become the emblems and inspirations of fine workmanship all the world over. But the significant lessons of the revival, for Morris, were the facts, firstly, that the revival was necessary because modern commerce had so degraded both commodities and their production, and, secondly, that when he had created his beautiful things only the rich could buy them. He wanted beautiful things for himself, and he wanted others to have them, for

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he knew that such things were not only beautiful to look upon and to use, but he knew also that in the creation of them men had been happy, and he wanted all men to be happy. He demanded, therefore, that all things made by man should be the symbols of joyful work. And it was because our present methods of commerce made it impossible to produce such symbols that he became a Socialist.

In his Utopia, that perfect piece of English prose, called "News from Nowhere," we have the picture of a world grown young again. It is a dream of a robust age in which men and women work together without care and want, holding all things in common, and taking the sort of interest in their lives that an artist takes in his work. In all his efforts for Socialism, Morris has this Nowhere of his for goal. He first thought it could be realised by raising the standards of public taste in the things they used and made. But after a while he found that such a propaganda alone would be useless. It was then that he threw in his lot with the Socialists, and worked under the Red Flag with Henry Mayers Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Party.

Merely political propaganda with its necessary compromises had small attraction for Morris, and he eventually seceded from the Social Democrats and took with him all the more revolutionary members, and, with them, founded the Socialist League, from which he eventually seceded, and ultimately he confined his active Socialist propaganda to that



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section of the League which used to meet at his own house in Hammersmith. This group became the Hammersmith Socialist Society, and Morris remained a member of it for the rest of his life.

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As a Socialist propagandist Morris showed the same tremendous energy which he put into all he undertook. He did not place himself on a pinnacle for admiration, but plunged into the thick of the turmoil. Speaking here, there and everywhere, in dim-lit and dirty club-rooms in unsavoury districts of London and the provinces, and at street corners and other open-air places, marching in proletarian processions to Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square, editing, financing and writing most of a Socialist paper, he became one of the most active propagandists of his day.

A certain impatience always dominated Morris, and he would express this impatience in several ways ; one, and the most familiar among those who knew him, was the hurling about of forceful vehement expressions, which he humorously called " talking to no one in particular." He wanted things to move along at a quicker pace ; and he grew restive when half measures were suggested. He disliked compromise, and in common with many Socialists of the period he believed at one time that the day of revolution, when the whole of the present social system would be abolished, was not far off. But experience of his fellow-countrymen and his comrade Socialists

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eventually killed such bright hope. And towards the end of his life he gradually abandoned political work of all kinds and devoted himself more to his workshops and the Kelmscott Press.

The quality of his Socialism, like that of every Socialist, was largely determined by his own genius ; for Socialism is an intensely personal thing ; once having accepted the doctrine, the dream springs out of the man. Morris's Utopia was naturally a craftsman's paradise made up of design and good workmanship applied to life ; it was the apotheosis of the applied arts and their translation into an era of freedom, economic peace and good-fellowship. All his ideas bear upon this dream, and the beautiful things he made are the kind of things the realisation of such a dream would make the common objects of daily life.

## A QUARTET OF POTTERS

**B**EFORE me as I write stands a vase. There is nothing remarkable in that ; but this is a vase of distinctive yet unobtrusive grace ; it is not necessarily the grace that holds you in thrall at the first glance, although it has that power also, but the grace that insinuates and wins you unawares. Its proportion is so exquisite that it affects the mind like music, like slow, stately music ; or, better, like the balance of the large, easy flight of certain sea-birds. It compels you to think off such things, of balanced, accomplished things, things which round off, as it were, the infinitude in which every man's thoughts flounder and fret or take their ease.

Yet you are not only delighted by the proportion of my vase, for this proportion is wedded unto a subtle colouring of equal charm. There is something strident, something of the brass band, in the colouring of so much pottery, even in Imari and Satsuma, in Sèvres and Derby and in Delft, but no hints of high sounds spring out of the greens and greys which bewitch the eye on the shell-like surface of my vase. All is modulated to a harmony of whispering quiet. To look at my vase after the hurly-burly of the modern day is like going into a retreat where the tele-

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phone bell is not and the motor never was. You feel grateful to those greens fading into greys and greys fading into green, in and out of which curve and float the quaintest and most graceful of fishes etched richly into the clay.

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A little to the westward of Chancery Lane, on the opposite side of Holborn, there is one of those dim lanes of tall and somewhat unkempt houses with shop fronts which are, if not peculiar to, at least at their best in London. About half-way down the lane, which is called Brownlow Street, there is a little shop, in whose white-framed window may be seen at any time of the year an assortment of stoneware vases akin to mine ; and there are as well jugs, and other objects of the potter's craft ; pieces of craftsmanship which every now and then hold up the judicious passer-by in wonderment. There is nothing about the little shop at all like the shops of modern commerce. Business, you imagine, may possibly take place there, but you feel that the main object is something different. The pots are not arranged like the crockery in an ordinary shop, and there is slight evidence of antagonism towards dust.

When you enter the shop the effect is much the same. You find yourself first in a dim-lit passage with crowded shelves of stoneware—jugs carved into leering, laughing, grinning, and ogling faces, jostling the most impossible, and withal most



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fascinating pot birds with delightfully disturbing anthropological expressions ; vases as beautiful as the one I have described and of innumerable shapes and sizes ; and queer little imps blowing horns or beating cymbals—a curious but goodly assembly of unique ceramic products, huddled together in their dim and dusty domain with every appearance of self-satisfaction and content. Opposite the shelves is a desk with an inkpot of the same ware as the other pottery, and a little chaos of papers—and this last is the only suggestion of commerce.

You are undecided how far to proceed, for you see more light and more strange and beautiful pots in a small square room beyond ; but presently you are set at rest by the appearance of a little man, bespectacled and *negligé*, with a half-carved figure of clay in one hand and a wooden tool like a scalpel in the other. You notice, although the light is dim, that his face, swathed though it is in a shaggy beard, and crowned with a tangled mane of brown and grey hair, is quick with the intelligence of the artist ; and if you are patient, you will soon realise that you stand before a master-craftsman—Wallace Martin, the eldest of the quartet of brothers who make the stoneware which has given me so much delight. Or it may be that you will be received by Edwin Martin, a taller man of middle age, with the sensitive face of a poet ; he also comes with his work in his hand : in all probability an unfired vase, into whose drab clay he is etching some quaint device ; for

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that is his contribution to the art of creating Martinware.

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These potters do not approach you as shopmen, and I dare not think what would happen if you attempted immediately to open up commercial relations. I have seen many pieces of stoneware bought of Wallace and Edwin Martin, but I have never seen them *sell* a piece. The pots are there, they have their prices marked on them, you may examine them and admire and, if you wish, purchase them, but if you only admire you are just as—and, I sometimes think, more—welcome. For the Martin Brothers are reluctant to part with the treasures they have made; they are jealous of other ownership even after they are convinced of its worthiness.

There is a charming simplicity about these brothers. Their craft is everything; and they never tire of discussing it in quiet homely phrases which tell you far more than all the art talk of the drawing-rooms and the coteries. All about you are pots of superb proportion and exquisite colouring, and there is also enough quaintness and whimsical fancy in clay in their shop to make the fortune of any black-and-white artist. Yet there is no talk about art as such, only about the actual making of these things, by men who have a child-like joy and pride in their work, and who love their work and are happy in telling you about it. William Morris would have delighted in these men, whose creations are the

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quintessence of joy and work combined. And he would have loved to hear Wallace Martin, clay in hand, discussing enthusiastically problems of life and religion, commingled with a deeply informed technical interpretation of his craft.

This enthusiasm and practical knowledge is manifested even in the simplest piece of Martinware. You have but to look at these creations to recognise that their makers live for them. It is this reverent and joyful craftsmanship infused with rare imagination which turns the rough clay into beautiful vases and jugs, strange birds and imps, and satyrs that have become devils in the mediæval vision of Wallace Martin.

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Martin Brothers are all the more remarkable in our age because they are pure Londoners, and, indeed, there is not a little of the colour of London in the low tones of their dyes. Their father was Robert Thomas Martin, stationer, of Queen Hythe, Thames Street, E.C., coming originally from Norfolk; but their mother was actually a native of Thames Street in the city, and in that street Wallace also was born. They first began as potters at Fulham in 1873, and in 1877 moved to Southall, where their pottery has remained till now.

Rarely have four brothers so complemented one another, and for forty years their complementary qualities worked eloquently together, when death took Charles Martin away from them. A remarkable

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circumstance of this fraternal partnership is the fact that each brother has carried out a certain and definite part of the work, and a kind of division of labour has existed throughout, which, in other circumstances, might have had ill effects on the completed objects of their craft ; but the sympathy of the brothers in their co-operate aim has saved their work from the evils of that bane of all good craftsmanship, the division of labour.

Wallace Martin, who is nearing the age of seventy, is the sculptor and modeller. Quaint face-jugs, musical imps and delightful grotesque birds are the outcome of his genius and handiwork. Walter Martin<sup>1</sup> combines the art of potter and chemist ; it is he who mixes the West of England clays of which the pots are made, and stands all day at the ancient potter's wheel, " throwing " the beautiful shapes which are later etched all over with the strangely fascinating devices of Edwin Martin, who is the etcher and painter of the combination. Walter is responsible also for the pigments used in the colouring of the clays. The late Charles Martin, who died in June 1909, in his sixty-second year, used to preside over the little shop in Brownlow Street, watching affectionately over the beloved pots and releasing them reluctantly. All the work of firing, mixing clays and chemicals, throwing, modelling, etching and selling, is done by the brothers Martin without any outside

<sup>1</sup> Walter Martin died suddenly, in April last, after this essay had been put into type.



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help—and every piece they make is unique—no shape or design ever being repeated.

With mediæval simplicity and sincerity the Martin Brothers go to work, requiring few aids from modern science, and although they seem to be far apart from the scramble and shouting of the modern world, throwing back, as it were, to the remote Middle Ages, yet are they modern in a very real way. The modern note is struck in each of their creations. They are out of touch, however, with all save a few in this age in their rule of never repeating a single design. The uniformity of to-day has not reached the Martin pottery ; which means that these craftsmen are not manufacturers and their pottery remote from the “ pot banks ” of Staffordshire. All the prodigality of genius is to be found in the infinite variety of their products ; but, at the same time, there is no striving after vain effects. Each piece of Martinware is unique, but all Martinware is alike ; just as you will find variation and personality expressed in the details of the harmony which goes to the building of a Gothic minster.

The two chief variations of Martinware are colour and decoration. The colours are generally worked into the actual clay before “ firing,” and sometimes inlaid by the decorator. The bulk of the designs, especially those of Edwin Martin, are etched in clay. Charm of colour and design is always a characteristic of Martinware, but besides these qualities an incalculable charm is derived from the hard, shell-like

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surface of all the pieces. This surface is a triumph of the ceramic art. It is really a salt glaze produced by submitting each piece to the ordeal of actual contact with salt-fed flames.

In the early days of the pottery experiments were made in design, and it was some years before the potters found the real trend of their genius. At first they borrowed *motifs* from the Renaissance, but to-day these early efforts, though excellent in form, look crude in design beside their later work. To-day they follow no school, but find a real basis of design in their own whims and fancies. Inlaid and indented devices, following the geometrical designs of the artificer Nature, as she reveals herself in gourd and sea-shell, now dominate the vase shapes, varied by strange and beautifully etched devices of fishes, crustaceans, weird lizards and dragons.

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The Martin Brothers' love of the grotesque is best exemplified in the modelled figures and birds of Wallace Martin. In these there is a mastery beyond praise. Quietly, for years, and almost unknown, seeking no fame, and content with an income that would be despised by a suburban grocer, Wallace Martin has gone on carving his balls of clay into fancies that will live. He has passed the age when praise might have spoiled him ; indeed, praise of his genius is unnecessary, for, if I understand him aright, he wants neither that nor fame nor great wealth. If you enjoy the things he joys in making, it will be

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enough. But when we deplore the absence of originality among our native sculptors, we may find hope in remembering Wallace Martin. His grotesque face jugs are joys for ever, worthy receptacles of generous beverages ; his imps and satyrs conquer by the very abandon of their impishness ; whilst his birds defy all words, they are inexplicable and irresistible—they are a new species ; an addition to nature. Half human they are, and wise and sad and knowing, and you find yourself talking to them as though they lived. Perhaps they do somewhere, or if not I am sure they will, some day ; Wallace Martin it may be is teaching Nature some new tricks. Elsewhere we have nothing to compare with them save such literary cattle as the Jabberwock, the Quangle Wangle Quee and the Snark ; still, Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear did think along the same lines as Wallace Martin ; they dreamed similar dreams, only Wallace Martin has dreamt them in clay and baptized them with flame.

## HENRY MAYERS HYNDMAN

(1911)

ENGLAND is at last talking about Henry Mayers Hyndman, but England is neither talking about Hyndman for what Hyndman is, nor for what he has done, but because he has written a book. It has been overlooked somehow that the book in question is the by-product of a very remarkable life ; and it is highly probable that the bare fact of Hyndman's existence may come as a surprise to a great many otherwise well-informed people. Still more well-informed people, knowing of his existence only from the daily newspapers, will be surprised to find that this Socialist agitator of the reddest type is a highly respectable member of the English bourgeoisie, born of wealthy parents, educated at Cambridge, experienced as a journalist and a traveller, and claiming among his friends many of the finest, as well as the best-known, men of his day. Four years ago Hyndman told a friend of mine, who had been offering him birthday congratulations, that he was sixty-five years young, and in his book, "The Record of an Adventurous Life," he describes himself to-day as an active man of sixty-nine. There



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we have the real Hyndman ; the restless energy that has ruffled the surface of English politics and upheld the banner of uncompromising Socialism in England for well over a quarter of a century.

Hyndman is, in many ways, an activity, a force, rather than an achievement. Doubtless he would tell you he was a great success, but that would only be a part of his undying enthusiasm, his perpetual youth ; for no matter how sweetly reasonable he may be on such topics, to the outside world, as well as to the larger part of the world of Socialism, Hyndman is that moving, tragic force, the Eternal Impossibilist. On the other hand, his impossibilism is an unconscious rather than a conscious thing. I think he would like to be successful, and I think the mantle of success would sit well on his shoulders ; but he is far too reasonable ever to be anything more than a failure. Years ago *The Pall Mall Gazette* asked ironically : “ Why does Mr Hyndman go about calling himself the Social Democratic Federation ? ” But *The Pall Mall Gazette* did not realise half of the truth it spoke. This tiresome Utopian is not only the father of the Social Democratic Party in England, he is its guide, philosopher and friend, its inspirer-in-chief, its prophet and its genial autocrat. So important is he to the organisation that if you took him away it would either collapse or grow into something new and strange. Under his long reign the Social Democratic Federation, now the Social Democratic Party, has never for a moment deviated from its prescribed

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path. In the midst of political and economic battles it has remained inviolate in principle and impregnable in idea ; and although it has achieved apparently little more than a *status quo*, it has, in reality, acted as an effectual economic dam against temporary floods of reaction from less uncompromising sources of social revolt.

Since the S. D. P. was formed many Socialist societies have come into existence, to flutter briefly before the public gaze and fall to earth with broken wings ; others, more yielding to popular prejudices and conventional expediencies, like the Independent Labour Party and the Fabian Society, have come and worked, and had their brief moment of brilliance, only to settle into a premature and effete old age ; but the S. D. P., with H. M. Hyndman bearing aloft the Red Flag proudly, seems to be eternal. In its early days he drew under its banner all the bright spirits then beginning to accept the Socialist idea ; but he was not strong enough to hold them together. Bernard Shaw left him for the Fabian Society, and William Morris left him for the ill-fated Socialist League, but, undaunted, Hyndman refused to capitulate and continued to run his paper, *Justice*, and his Federation, as it was then called, in company with his faithful comrades Harry Quelch and Belfort Bax. Innumerable pamphlets and leaflets were issued and scattered over England, and many elections were fought with heroically disastrous results. England showed not the slightest inclination to join

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the Social Democratic Party, and even the majority of those who called themselves Socialists refused to be converted. But the S. D. P. did not die ; it is alive to-day, its disciples go forth into the highways and byways preaching, with the unbending enthusiasm of religious conviction, the only true Socialistic faith. Great halls throughout the land still rock with the eloquence of Hyndman. But nothing else seems to happen. The revolution is as far off as ever, and the people of England understand something less of the Marxian theory of value than they did before. All this, however, has not destroyed the fire or the enthusiasm of his deathless faith and hope. Henry Mayers Hyndman is sixty-nine years young, and as he stands on the platform, four square to his audience, pouring torrents of irony, invective, sarcasm, dialectic and humour over the uplifted faces, you feel with Whitman that, though victory may be great, defeat also is great.

There is something incongruous about this respectable, frock-coated, silk-hatted, grey-bearded, high-browed patriarchal figure even in the conventionalised Socialist movement of to-day. But what must he have looked in the Socialist movement of the eighteen eighties ? For, save the fact that his frosting beard gives his years away, he looked the same then as he does now—something between a successful merchant and a Nonconformist preacher ; but his comrades in those days considered homespun and corduroy, clay pipes, red ties and sombreros the outward and

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visible signs of an inward and revolutionary grace. Such conventions, however, did not affect the father of the S. D. P., for, believing, as he does, that men are equal before God, no matter what clothes they wear, he abandoned all claims to distinction of birth and possessions except the sartorial badges of his social heritage. I fancy Hyndman would have pleased Walt Whitman. He is a superb person, the sublimation of the democratic's poet's idea of the divine average. He is unique only in the greatness of his endeavour ; ready and willing to make sacrifices, to do the dirty work, as any humble member of the rank and file ; arrogant only in his persistency ; original only in his enthusiasm for the phase of a cause that has neither lost nor found itself ; persuasive, eloquent, laborious ; yet, in spite of all these things, in spite of the spite and jealousy, the meanness and suspicion, of political propaganda, Hyndman has remained clean and lovable and honest, adored by his followers, honoured by Socialist, conformist and nonconformist alike, and misrepresented by his foes.

I have said that his life did not represent an achievement, but surely to have achieved so much is to have achieved much. That such a man should have been, until now, comparatively unknown to the mass of his fellow-countrymen is a grievous fault, and his fellow-countrymen are the losers. But, inspired by his own account of himself, the press has made some amends by at length discovering that he is at least a forceful



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personality. What the future holds for this warrior of revolt, who has fought so valiantly without reward and without success, I know not. In his seventieth year he has been made the first chairman of the newly formed British Socialist Party, which may be taken as an earnest of more strenuous work for the cause of his heart. But, whatever the years may hold for him or us, Henry Mayers Hyndman will go on his way thundering his wrath against a system that, for him, is an iniquity, like a modern Isaiah, hedged about not so much by the enmity of that system as by the doctrine of Karl Marx, whose apostle to the English people he is. It is good, however, for England to know of the existence of Hyndman, for, although his Social Democratic Party bears few direct records of success, as success is understood by most of us, he and his co-workers have been an indirect and underground disturbing factor in the comfort of our outlook upon social ideas : they have done their share towards loosening the foundations of commercial civilisation.

## THE IDEAS OF GEORGE MEREDITH

**A**T one time, and not so long ago, it was the literary fashion to deplore the absence of appreciation of the novels of George Meredith. During the days following the novelist's death the newspapers were full of well-meaning articles which shed tears over the comparative neglect of his work by the reading public. But the facts hardly justify this despondency. Many a "popular" novelist might envy Meredith's circulations, and only a very few of them will have the joy of bequeathing to their heirs so comfortable an inheritance as he did. Indeed, during the last twenty years of his life Meredith was in danger of becoming a popular success. But, withal, it is obvious that he never moved the national heart as Dickens did. Still, it was not fair to blame the public, so many of whom took him for granted, thus paying him the compliment reserved for classics. Meredith makes a demand which the average novel reader cannot meet. He demands a mental effort. This is almost an insurmountable object to all those (and they are the majority) whose only time for reading is at the brief close of a hard day's work. Twenty years ago, or thereabouts, readers of Meredith were a select company, always growing in numbers,

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but always inclined to be exclusive and just a little bit superior. Your true Meredithian was often, as it happened, a person with a margin of leisure about his days, in which he could cultivate intellectual habits, but he was by no means entirely dependent upon leisured readers, for clerks and others, who spent laborious days, burnt midnight oil in his honour.

The intellectual difficulties of Meredith have been complicated by the absurd charge of obscurity so often brought against his work. Being human, Meredith has faults, but only the addlepate could call him obscure. He shares with Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy, and the rest, the right to indulge in occasional obscurities, but in all other respects the charge is untrue. Doubtless, if he were approached for the first time through "One of Our Conquerors" or the prefatory chapter of "The Egoist," the unsuspecting and unprepared reader might be forgiven for mistaking compactness for obscurity, intensity for opacity. But on the other hand such a reader would just as readily come to an opposite conclusion if he approached Meredith by way of "Rhoda Fleming" or "Vittoria."

Up to the time of Meredith all great English novels were dominated by that dearest and most assertive characteristic of our race—sentimentality. It almost swamps the colossal powers of Samuel Richardson, it peeps eternally out of the virility of Henry Fielding, it is Sterne's mainstay, Thackeray's pet vice, and Dickens' evil genius. Meredith represents a new epoch, or, better, the close of the old epoch, for he is still

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engaged with sentimentalism, but he knows he is, and he is engaged in laughing at it. Meredith realises that in what may be called the intensive culture of civilisation, the overweening self-consciousness of men has developed into a subtle tyranny of sentiment, due largely to man's difficulty in laughing at himself. We are pompous and overbearing, we are self-assertive and jealous, we are snobbish and priggish, and all these are forms of sentimentalism. Often they are ineffectual in their silliness, but often also they are the cause of suffering and inconvenience, especially to women. Many of the older novelists hold up the mirror to life, saying in effect, "Look at each other and weep!" (Tears of sorrow or tears of joy as occasion serves.) Then Meredith comes along, also holding up a mirror. But he says, "Look at yourselves—and laugh." He is a social doctor, a specialist in the diseases of the sentiments, and he tries to cure us by the use of a kind of intellectual radium, called by him, "the oblique ray"—that is to say, by exposing our sentimentalisms to the light of comedy, and so infusing us with the curative comic spirit. His test of civilisation is the extent to which the idea of comedy flourishes, and his test of comedy is that it should awaken thoughtful laughter. That is the central note in his superb series of comedy-novels; and it is certain that unless we possess some capacity for comedy we shall not fully appreciate his work, much less enjoy it. There is no finer literary test of the sense of comedy than Meredith's novels; but in life there



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is a finer, and these novels should help us to meet it. Meredith has put it into inevitable words : " You may estimate your capacity for comic perception by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love, without loving them less ; and more by being able to see yourself somewhat ridiculous in dear eyes, and accepting the correction their image of you proposes." In a very real way those few words contain the quintessence of Meredith.

Throughout the novels this comic spirit is at work, shining like a searchlight over our social follies and absurdities, and revealing their mainsprings in a maze of false sentiment. The spirit of man is lost in this laughable, but monstrous, thing. The greatness of Meredith shines out in the skill with which he maintains the high seriousness of his purpose, without letting his seriousness affect the glitter of his wit or the steady light of his imagination. It must not be imagined, however, that he sees no use for sentimentality. There is a use for all things, and Meredith is a philosopher. Sentimentalism is in its right place when it is secret—an affair for, say, two at most. " I can enjoy it," he says, " and shall treat it respectfully if you will confide it to me alone ; but I and my friends must laugh at it outright." Sentimentalism is quite natural, but naturally private.

" Nor let the philosopher venture hastily to despise them (the sentimentalists) as pipers to dilettante life." He says : " Such persons come to us in the order

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of civilisation. In their way they help to civilise us. Sentimentalists are a perfectly natural growth of a fat soil. Wealthy communities must engender them. If with attentive minds we mark the origin of classes, we shall discern that the Nice Feelings and the Fine Shades play a principal part in our human development and social history. I dare not say that civilised man is to be studied with the eye of a naturalist ; but my vulgar meaning might almost be twisted to convey that our sentimentalists are a variety owing their existence to a certain prolonged term of comfortable feeding. The pig, it will be retorted, passes likewise through this training. He does. But in him it is not combined with an indigestion of high German Romances. Here is so notable a difference, that he cannot possibly be said to be of the family. And I maintain it against him, who have nevertheless, listened attentively to the eulogies pronounced by the vendors of prize bacon."

The early Victorian novelists made women the arch-sentimentalists, but in the novels of Meredith the chief sentimentalists are men. The biggest of them is Sir Willoughby Patterne. He is the central figure in Meredith's finest novel, "The Egoist." In Sir Willoughby we see—or ought to see—ourselves. That is, we men, who go to clubs and the city, and put on superior airs. In Sir Willoughby we see man, masterful, proud, jealous, a tyrant of niceness, scrupulous in his demands for the purity of his womenfolk, and

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eternally searching their eyes for the reflection of himself. "The Egoist" is the only incontestable argument for woman's emancipation.

There is also another spirit in the novels of Meredith working side by side with this spirit of comedy. It is the spirit of philosophy; not a formal philosophy, but a philosophic point of view: the attitude of one who looks upon life with full knowledge of its joys and pains, its virtues and vices, its vanities and follies, and, like Walt Whitman, declares it to be good. It is the attitude of one who sees no line of demarcation between spirit and matter, but who sees both spirit and matter working together, in the common cause of Mother Earth towards perfection and power. Meredith turns to Mother Earth with full love and confidence. Nature, for him, is enough. "She can lead us, only she, to God's footstool." He believes not in the renunciation, but in the use of all the good things she has given us; and as to the unknown, he has no fear. What is withheld is withheld for a purpose, and when the time comes all shall be revealed. Death for him was but a change from one state to another, like the changes of the seasons. Conquer the fear of this change and you are put in the possession of life. "Every night when I go to bed," he said, when nearing the end of his life, "I know I may not rise from it." Then he added, "That is nothing to me. I hope I shall die with a good laugh, like the old Frenchwoman. The curé came wailing to her about her salvation, and things like that, and she told him her

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best improper story, and died." With such robust humour, and such courageous faith, George Meredith made magic, revealing to a progressively heeding world a new natural history of man, based upon observation of sentiments and motives, rather than upon observation of habits and customs. Wherein he is English in outlook, he recalls Henry Fielding, a cultured, reticent Fielding, but still Fielding in robustness and, indeed, in philosophy. "Tom Jones" and "Sandra Belloni" differ in method rather than attitude. But Meredith grafts on to the oak-like strength of his English a dancing lightness, a capacity for playing with ideas which in English literature recalls Laurence Sterne, but which in reality, and its resemblance to Sterne bears this out, is more French than English. Still the novels of Meredith remain English in form and spirit—but they have the advantage of being able to speak French when occasion permits. Occasion does often permit it; but in the main these novels think and talk in good solid English, betraying, even through their radicalisms, which may be French, an admiration of the nobility, when it is noble, that is certainly native, and equally native apprehension of sentimentalism. There was probably much of Wilfred Pole, and perhaps something of Sir Willoughby Patterne, in Meredith, as much, perhaps as there was of Evan Harrington; and although he would hardly have admitted it to others, he was not the man to deny it to himself.



## AN IMPRESSIONIST OF SCULPTURE

**O**F the making of sculptures there is no end, but, alas! most of them are bad, particularly those that find their way into our long-suffering public places. We have indeed become so inured to these trivialities and absurdities in stone and bronze that most of us hardly see them; familiarity has bred indifference, yet, at the same time, for some inexplicable reason, we continue to subscribe guineas for the multiplication of the futilities on the slightest provocation. Be this as it may, there are sculptors living to-day who are doing work which sooner or later must rescue their craft from the ignominy into which it fell during the nineteenth century. All over Europe there are men imagining in clay and dreaming in bronze, whose statues must eventually rank with the world's masterpieces of art. Among these creators of a new statuary, Jo Davidson has made for himself a position which even to-day, when he is barely thirty years of age, stands for distinction and imaginative power among the best of the new sculptors.

It was Auguste Rodin who liberated sculpture from outworn convention, and all the younger men are

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indebted to him. He is the master sculptor of our age, just as Michael Angelo was the master sculptor of the Renaissance. Davidson, among the rest, has come under Rodin's influence. But the influence has not so much helped Davidson to find Rodin as Davidson to find Davidson. The younger sculptor reveals in his work a personality as distinct as it is interesting, and above all things a hint of power which promises much more.

. . . . .  
Jo Davidson is an American, of Russo-Jewish origin, and he first studied in New York. Later, he went to Paris, and became a student at the Beaux Arts, but the sedate views and academic measures of that institution were foreign to his rebel genius, so after three weeks he took his departure, and henceforth became his own school. "I had enough of the Beaux Arts in three weeks," he said to me in his studio in the Boulevard Edgar Quinet. "What I wanted was life; they offered me antiquities," he added, as his fingers moved creatively over a chaos of grey clay, which began to assume all the wonder and mystery of rhythmic form at the dictation of his nervous touch.

The work of Davidson is impressionist; but it is not the impressionism of the painter, not even when the painter happens to be, say, Renoir, whose wistful faces have some affinity with the sensitive forms of Davidson's sculptures. His art is more allied to impressionism in music than in painting; it has the



STUDY FOR A STATUE OF A RUSSIAN DANCER

BY

JO DAVIDSON





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same reflective emotion, the same self-contained sense of design. Whilst looking at his later work your mind is instinctively swayed by its musical rhythm. You feel that you could far more easily sing about his statues or play about them than write or talk about them. There is something lyrical, for instance, about that superb study of a head which he calls "A Fragment." The rhythm of words and tones are in that lyric in bronze, yet one does not require any other art to interpret this direct and sensitive revelation of firmly gracious and intelligent womanhood.

Whilst looking at Davidson's statues you do not feel that he is conscious of any absolute view of life or ideas. The quick response of a deep impression of actuality broods over his work. It is dominated by feeling, wistful yet joyous, and, though not lacking in thought-stuff, pure emotion is its true inspiration and element. Davidson has ideas and theories which he will expound cheerfully by the hour ; but he has not, so far as I can see, attempted to put an idea as such into form. Ideas there are in his work, but they start out of it by accident, as it were, they are by-products. The quality of his vision lies in its sense of emotional fact, and that after all is the only, the final, reality. Beauty, for instance, beauty as an idea, as an absolute thing, is not his aim ; and that is just as well, for beauty as an absolute thing is non-existent. What he aims at is the representation in form of the thing he has felt whilst perceiving some object, or whilst dreaming ; and the quality we call

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beauty clothes all his works as a result, even though, as in those tragic little terra-cotta models of French peasant women which he has made, the actual thing seen has been a piece of what is conventionally supposed to be ugliness.

. . . . .

The sculptures of Davidson suggest classical statues transfigured by actuality ; they give you every now and then the feeling that you are looking at cold, formal, clay upon which the breath of life has blown and left it living ; as though the statue had moved in response to a thought, a whim, a passion, and assumed the pose of its new experience. Particularly do you feel this re-awakening of the classical in the modern about his epic figure, " La Terre," but added thereto you feel also the personality of the modern world ; that restless intensity of soul which sees, feels, imagines and records with reference only to itself. Jo Davidson is a representative of the new individualism. He sings his songs in bronze and creates tone-poems in clay in his own way. That is how it should be, and the judicious are made glad thereby.

Few sculptors in the past, and still fewer in the present, have set the seal of matured personality to their work at so early an age as Davidson ; his conception of life is large and free ; his imagination courageous, and his mind bright and alert ; and these things, taken in conjunction with the mastery he has shown over his materials, make his work one of the most hopeful expressions of the art vitality of our day.

## SUPERMAN

**T**HE world has always dreamt of the coming of a saviour, of some personified power which should save it from what at the particular time and place was considered to be evil—from pain and sin and death. Generally the dream has taken superhuman form ; the saviour of man must take the form of man, but remain at the same time something more than man : a god, in short. In our own day a change has been coming over the vision of men. The desire for a saviour has not been abandoned ; on the contrary, the need for such a being has become more pressing than ever. Europe cries aloud in each of its restless parts—in Russia, in Germany, in France, in England—for a man who will ride the whirlwind and direct the storm of modern unrest. But the cry is for a man, not a god.

It must be noted, however, that this cry for a man, leader of men is only the popular cry ; anything might satisfy it. But there are small sections of people in many civilised countries to-day who have long since abandoned their hope in mere man, just as they have abandoned faith in the superhuman, as that word used to be understood. These people look further ahead, without losing touch with actuality, to

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a new ideal called Superman. We have all heard the word. Has it not stalked across the popular stage? Even the daily papers have mentioned it, whilst for those who take the trouble to read about things for themselves there is a library of books expounding and confounding, upholding and denouncing, the idea in many languages and many accents.

In these books may be found the keynote of a dream which is as yet in its infancy, but it carries with it the idea-stuff which may ultimately dominate the imagination of the world. It was broached first in the modern world by Friedrich Nietzsche. This German philologist, struggling with the values of words, stumbled upon the need for revaluing ideas as well, and the outcome was an informal philosophy demanding what he called "the transvaluation of all values," or, in other words, a general stocktaking and discounting of the stock-in-trade of the human mind and its conceptions of life and action. In propounding the doctrine of new values, Nietzsche gradually realised that man would be unequal to the task; indeed, he saw quite clearly that the cowardice, the hypocrisy, and the morality he had to fight were essentially human; the chief weakness of the human being was being human, what he called "human-all-too-human," and the only lasting way out of the dilemma was the production of a new type of being which would be free of this weakness. That new type he named Superman.

The idea of a Superman is, however, not en-



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tirely new. It has probably existed at the back of every human longing for a leader, a saviour, or a messiah, since the world began ; even the word " Superman " is not new. Many German writers have hinted at the idea, and, doubtless, also, Emerson and Thoreau had glimmerings of it, or some similar idea, as William Blake most certainly had ; whilst we have always been familiar with the word " superhuman," and writers like Walt Whitman and Thomas Carlyle have voiced the cause of the " superb person " and the " hero " each in his own way. But Whitman came nearer Nietzsche than Carlyle did, for he did not imagine his superb person lord and master of a race of inferior persons who worshipped and followed him, as Carlyle imagined his hero, but as one of a race of similar superb persons, each equally strong and dignified, much as Nietzsche imagined his Superman. There is, however, this fundamental difference between Whitman and Nietzsche ; it exists also between all the other Supermanians and the greatest modern interpreter of the idea : with them Superman is merely a great man, a superb person, a hero ; with Nietzsche he is to be a new species :

*" I teach you the Superman. Man is something that is to be surpassed. What have ye done to surpass man ?*

*" All beings hitherto have created something beyond themselves ; and ye want to be the ebb of that great tide, and would rather go back to the beast than surpass man ?*

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*“What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock, a thing of shame. And just the same shall man be to the Superman : a laughing-stock, a thing of shame.*

*“Ye have made your way from worm to man, and much within you is still worm ; and once were ye apes, and even yet man is more of an ape than any of the apes.*

*“Even the wisest among you is only a disharmony and hybrid of plant and phantom. But do I bid you become phantoms or plants ?*

*“Lo, I teach you the Superman ! ”*

These are the parent-words of the modern idea of Superman. It is from them that all the great discussions have come, but no interpreters of Nietzsche have as yet fully realised their true import ; all of them argue as if they imagined Superman to be an improved sort of man, a revised aristocrat, a hero, an empire-builder, some resplendent combination of Napoleon, Goethe and Mr Pierpont-Morgan.

But upholders of the idea have not as yet given us any positive conception of Superman's appearance and character ; their pictures are all negatives. Mr G. K. Chesterton is the only writer who has deliberately attempted to draw the portrait of a Superman, but he took trouble to make us realise that his idea of the new type was an imbecile. Mr H. G. Wells also rejects the idea ; the Superman for him is nothing but a “blonde beast” ; a sort of German bogey-man. But in his forecast of the future of

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society, "A Modern Utopia," he has pictured the world under the administration of an order of Samurai, who very much resemble the popular intellectual conception of what Superman might be. Still these Samurai of H. G. Wells are as far removed from the Nietzschean ideal as are such great men as Shakespeare, Goethe, Shelley, whom, along with Cromwell, Napoleon and Cæsar, Mr Bernard Shaw considers "our few accidental Supermen." Obviously Bernard Shaw has not got much further than Thomas Carlyle, who placed men of this type in the category of heroes, beside Mahomet, Luther and Knox, in the famous series of lectures which he based on the half-truth that "the history of what man has accomplished in this world is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked here."

All the heroes and great men about whom we know anything that is at all reliable have only a partial resemblance to Nietzsche's idea of the Superman. Julius Cæsar, Cromwell, Napoleon, Socrates, Goethe, John Knox, Luther, Shakespeare, Shelley—looked at through Nietzsche's eyes—are human-all-too-human, and the more human because of their greatness. Somewhat nearer to the idea, but still far removed from it, are the great mythical or semi-mythical figures of religion and romance: Moses and Mahomet, Odin and Cuchulain, Apollo and Dionysos, Siegfried, King Arthur and Robin Hood. But after we have said our best of them, we can no more acclaim them Supermen in the Nietzschean sense

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than we can acclaim as Supermen such self-made masters of the modern world as Pierpont-Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, Lord Northcliffe or Sir Thomas Lipton. Nietzsche himself saw more hope of Superman in a Cæsar Borgia than in a Parsifal.

But he has not told us what Superman will be like, and doubtless the reason for this omission is not far to seek : he did not know ; he no more knew what Superman would be like than Columbus knew what America would be like. One of the limitations of man is that he cannot imagine anything that is not human ; his very dream is a reflection of himself, even though it be the dream of a Jabberwock or a Gollywog or monsters like the Dragon or the Hippogriff. If he imagine a god, that god will be a glorification of himself ; as like as not, himself in his Sunday clothes. And so it is with his imaginary conception of Superman. If, on the other hand, the idea is repugnant to him, as it is to G. K. Chesterton, he will visualise the Superman as possessing attributes which he would despise in himself, as, in short, an imbecile. But if he wanted to believe in Superman as he has wanted to believe in God, he would immediately conceive him to be the glorification of some quality he admires in himself or something he would like to be himself. If, for instance, he believe in Empire (with a big E), he will think imperially of Cecil Rhodes, whom he will link up with Cæsar and Napoleon ; or, maybe, the process will work in the other direction, from activity to idea ; as, say, in the case of a banker,



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who would naturally imagine Lord Rothschild to be a Superman of that craft, just as, again, a grocer might see Superman attained in Sir Thomas Lipton. But in all these cases they would be confusing mere bigness with change of species. What we have to realise is that Superman will be other than man. "Man is something to be surpassed." But even when we have gone so far as to realise the idea of a new species that will supplant man, we can go no farther along that line. Man can no more visualise his successor than the ape could visualise man.

But if we cannot say what form Superman will take, we can gather from the teachings of Friedrich Nietzsche the tendencies and conditions that may produce the new species. For Nietzsche is no advocate of special or spasmodic creation. Superman will be the outcome of an evolutionary process like the rest of the species. Nietzsche, unlike the Darwinians, does not look upon man as the final and supreme effort of life ; man for him is but a bridge, a rope thrown across an abyss on the way to Superman, and his whole tirade against modern morals and modern civilisation may be summed up as an attack upon mankind for settling down to human conditions. He sees in the social life of to-day nothing but a conspiracy on the part of man to arrest the march of life towards the evolution of beings of greater power. Nietzsche is the first real optimist, because by filling man with despair he fills life with hope.

He sees man as a dull and muddy stream, and

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Superman as a great and swelling sea which will absorb the muddy stream without becoming unclean. It is true that he distinguishes between man and man, but his distinctions are not the old distinctions between the great man and the ordinary man. The thing that he denounces most in mankind is what he calls the "herding instinct." The really great man, the man who is heading straight for the clean seas of Superman, is the one who is neither dependent upon the herd nor upon its morality. Men cluster together because they are weak and afraid, and by this herding they become weaker, not stronger. Instead of breaking fresh ground in the evolution of life, they are eternally conserving the old positions and adapting themselves to the old surroundings. The great man makes his environment adapt itself to him; only the slave becomes amenable to his environment.

The Superman will be evolved out of this powerful type of man, out of the type which creates new values in life, and not out of the prevalent type which accepts life at the valuation of others. Morality, as we understand it, will have no meaning for this progressive type of man; he will be what Nietzsche calls "beyond good and evil"; he will not consider what is good or evil in the abstract—far less what other people call good and evil; the only test of such moral ideas will be himself. What is good for him will be good, what is bad, bad. This does not mean that he will be "selfish" in the ordinary acceptance

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of the term ; indeed, his attitude may easily produce a generosity and dignified unselfishness such as the world has never known before.

The forces we call instinct, desire, volition, will, are to be the *motifs* of action in such a type. But the action of the Superman will not be towards life ; Nietzsche substitutes what he has termed " the will to power " for Schopenhauer's " will to live." Power is the watchword, then, and the being who is prepared to sacrifice everything to power, not power in the abstract, but power for some purpose believed by him to be great, is aiding the evolution of life towards Superman. The pathway of such beings must needs be lonely and painful, but the superhuman " will to power " thrives on such things. Ever since the dawn of the human era, pain has been shunned as evil, but those who move towards Superman will welcome pain as the stone upon which they whet their power. Those who are about to become Supermen will welcome loneliness also ; they will see through the " pathos of distance " the temple of their genius. They will be the great despisers, criticising, rejecting, scorning the human-all-too-human, with its eternal readiness to yield to circumstances and environment, going on their way to the music of their own laughter born of the conqueror's joy. But though they will despise and reject what is not akin to their attitude towards life, they will not be negative in attitude ; the essence of the new progress is positive. Those who march towards Superman will

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be the eternal "yea sayers," the masters of their own whims.

Already there are many who look forward to the coming of this "world-approving, exuberant, vivacious," but eternally tragic, figure, as people of old time awaited the coming of a new god. Nietzsche wrecked his mighty brain in beating out this idea for man, and no greater insult could be dealt his idea than to associate the Superman with the little strong men who astound the world to-day with feats that appear great because of the general absence of greatness. Few of the so-called strong men of to-day are strong in the Nietzschean sense; these Malvolios of commerce are superweeds, not supermen: their greatness has been thrust upon them. The power of the Superman will be independent of circumstances, it will not be given. It will control because it must, and because it can. The Superman will convince by his presence.

One of the chief differences between Superman and man may well be that Superman will be an all-round being; he will not run to seed in specialism. Men are generally one thing or nothing—lawyers, drapers, doctors, clerks, grocers, poets, engineers, painters, journalists, navvies, sailors or what not—and each thinks and acts only in the circle of his own special province. We have even invented a proverb, "Jack of all trades, master of none," to discourage those who would take the Superhuman path and become masters of all trades and Jacks of none, for



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that is what Superman will be. The really great men of all ages have always been men of varied capacity. Your mere specialist was never a great man. Leonardo da Vinci was a master in painting, sculpture, architecture, engineering, and a philosopher to boot. Michael Angelo was both poet and scholar, painter, sculptor, architect and military engineer ; Napoleon was even greater as administrator than soldier ; Dante was a poet and a statesman. Such men, it may be assumed, have at least one of the attributes of the Superman.

It is certain that capacity and power will be united in the new race of Master-beings, but these will not be the only, nor perhaps the most important, qualities. There is another quality without which they are as naught. Nietzsche has associated this quality with the name of Dionysos. To the capacity and power of the great men must be added Dionysian ecstasy, that joy in life, that spirit of playfulness, that frenzy, abandonment, recklessness, or what you will, which swings a being along the creative path regardless of all consequences, reckless of all danger. Superman will welcome peril as man welcomes safety ; he will be the child of a race that has braved the fiery furnace so many times that eventually it is able to walk through the flames unscathed. Superman will be the reincarnation of the spirit of Dionysos—but he dare not come as one unique and astounding person—man would resent that, as he has always resented and killed those who are greater than him-

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self. Superman must come as a new species—as to-day he is a part of a new romance, which perhaps, after all, is the old romance—that romance which Emerson believed the world existed to realise, the romance which meant “the transformation of genius into practical power,” which promised always a new joy and demanded a new health.

“We new, nameless and unfathomable creatures,” he says, “we firstlings of a future still unproved—we, who have a new end in view, also require new means to that end—that is to say, a new healthiness, a stronger, keener, tougher, bolder and merrier healthiness than any that has existed heretofore. He who longs to feel in his own soul the whole range of values and aims that have prevailed on earth until this day, and to sail round all the coasts of this ideal ‘Mediterranean Sea’; who, from the adventures of his own inmost experience, would fain know how it feels to be a conqueror and a discoverer of the ideal;—as also how it is with the artist, the saint, the legislator, the sage, the scholar, the man of piety and the godlike anchorite of yore;—such a man requires one thing above all for his purpose, and that is, *great healthiness*—such healthiness as he not only possesses, but also constantly acquires, and must acquire, because he is continually sacrificing it again, and is compelled to sacrifice it! And now, therefore, after having been long on the way, we Argonauts of the idea, whose pluck is greater than prudence would allow, and who are often shipwrecked and bruised,

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but, as I have said, healthier than people would like to admit, dangerously healthy, and for ever recovering our health—it would seem as if we had before us, as a reward for all our toils, a country still undiscovered, the horizon of which no one has yet seen, a beyond to every country and every refuge of the ideal that man has ever known, a world so overflowing with beauty, strangeness, doubt, terror, and divinity, that both our curiosity and our lust of possession are frantic with eagerness. Alas ! how in the face of such vistas, and with such burning desire in our conscience and consciousness, could we still be content with *the man of the present day* ? This is bad indeed ; but, that we should regard his worthiest aims and hopes with ill-concealed amusement, or perhaps give them no thought at all, is inevitable. Another ideal now leads us on, a wonderful seductive ideal, full of danger, the pursuit of which we should be loath to urge upon anyone, because we are not so ready to acknowledge anyone's *right to it* : the ideal of a spirit who plays ingenuously (that is to say, involuntarily, and as the outcome of superabundant energy and power) with everything that, hitherto, has been called holy, good, inviolable and divine ; to whom even the loftiest thing that the people have with reason made their measure of value would be no better than a danger, a decay and an abasement, or at least a relaxation and temporary forgetfulness of self ; the ideal of a humanly superhuman well-being and goodwill, which often enough will seem

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inhuman—as when, for instance, it stands beside all past earnestness on earth, and all past solemnities in hearing, speech, tone, look, morality and duty, as their most lifelike and unconscious parody—but with which, nevertheless, *great earnestness* perhaps alone begins, the first note of interrogation is affixed, the fate of the soul changes, the hour-hand moves, and tragedy begins.” With such austerity, then, does Friedrich Nietzsche conceive his idea of Superman. But even he, with his large gift of vision, that vision which Swift called the art of seeing things invisible, has been able to do little more than hint at a tendency rather than embody an idea. Superman is as yet a name: an exuberant and tragic ghost pervading the twilight of humanity.



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